Serfojee Rajah 1827

DANGERS THROUGH LIFE:

OR,

The Victim of Seduction.

1095

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY MRS. PLUNKETT,

(LATE MISS GUNNING,)

AUTHOR OF THE *PACKET*, *ORPHANS OF SNOWDON*, &c. &c.

VOL. I.

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S SARASVATI MAHAL.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. EBERS, 23, OLD BOND-STREET.

1810.

Harding and Wright, Printers, St. John's Square, London.

1095

DEDICATION.

In an age like the present, when the most sacred ties are so constantly broken down by the increase of dissipation, and the loss of morality, not to say of *common decency*, in the first circles of high life, it may not, perhaps, be considered altogether useless to present to the world a simple tale, founded on truth, which cannot fail to point out, in *striking colours*, the ill effects of those early

and dangerous connections to which youth of both sexes are equally liable, on their first introduction into the splendid circles of the world, by falling into the hands of those persons who, from being vicious themselves, take a peculiar gratification in endeavouring to bring the pure mind of honour and unsophisticated innocence to their own despicable level; and the young and inexperienced are, alas! from the warmth and impetuosity of nature, but too likely to follow the flowing path of unrestrained enjoyment, without

1095

out reflecting that, from a momentary gratification of their senses, a deserving and amiable family may be dishonoured, and rendered miserable for life.

Every body panegyrizes the bliss of wedded love, and even the most depraved hold that sacred tie of God in a degree of veneration and respect; but though all *must* admire, *few*, very few, in the splendour of the world, are acquainted with its heartfelt charms, or practise the duties it enjoins. If objects derogating from the calm blessings of domestic hap-

piness, are likely to wean our weak minds from the true felicity they impart, we ought not to attempt the slightest gratification of our desires, since the experience of every day is a convincing proof that satiety changes the appearance of things, and forces the votaries of pleasure to seek for happiness in untried scenes, and, after the first gloss of novelty is worn off, they no longer take pleasure in that which has perhaps occasioned the most heart-rending agony to many a worthy breast, torn from a fond husband an adored wife, and

robbed

robbed a smiling infant of a mother's care, while the gray hairs of tender parents have sunk with sorrow to the grave. *All that is new, promises delight;* but, being possessed, its excellencies disappear, and again the man of pleasure will recur to variety for the attainment of pleasure, while he consigns the weak woman, who has forfeited the happiness, the honour, of her future life, to sigh after untasted bliss, and weep for ever the rashness of her neglect of the pure fountain, from which alone it springs.

In the married life, without an intimate union of heart and mind, there can be no affection; it is by such an union, that persons of sense and virtue endeavour to obtain real and pure felicity, by uniting their affections in a kindred soul. Unless a reciprocation of feeling takes place, marriage, indeed, is a sad ceremony, which joins the hands, but leaves the unfortunate couple with alienated and distracted minds; indifference usurps the place of love; indifference soon, in a heart of sensibility, produces disgust; disgust is, at *best*, attended with perpetual

tual strife. What enjoyment remains, when the heart no longer finds an object of affection in the person to whom it should be united by the closest ties? Children, even those dear objects of both parents, however at variance on other points, but united on the love of their innocent babes, always materially suffer from the smallest diminution of connubial happiness, instead of having before them the delightful sight of uniform tenderness, calculated to excite, in young hearts, sentiments of gentleness, virtue, and domestic harmony. The example of *coldness*,

of *secret dislike*, nay, sometimes even of *undisguised* hatred, insensibly prepares the innocent mind to be the receptacle of every vice; or if, which is but too generally the case, from the perfect indifference an unsocial husband and wife will most assuredly and naturally shew to their unfortunate offspring, they abandon them to the care of hirelings, they are equally in danger of being corrupted by the harshness, pusillanimity, and selfishness of these mercenary instructors. A wife, and mother, has many duties to perform, harsh perhaps to the

female

female mind at times, even to what the world call the best of husbands; but too frequently, we find those husbands lament the want of attachment and fidelity of their wives; and, at the very moment they do so, have only themselves to blame, for an estrangement of love their own conduct has banished from the citadel of government, by the harshness of manners, and the omissions of those nameless attentions, that warmth of tenderness, every woman has a right to expect and receive from a husband, and which unites both gratitude and love.

 Surely

Surely a reflecting mind could not expect to receive, without returning equal proof of tenderness. We cannot surely account for this contradiction, unless we believe that every man is at heart a tyrant, and wishes to receive, without returning, the genuine tenderness of unbounded passion. Surely selfishness is the only cause of such inconsistency; or why will a man, because he conceives he has a right to please himself, wring a heart with agony he should retain by love? Often too this cold, peevish, unkind husband, having forgot he has a wife, attaches himself elsewhere.

elsewhere. Has this man a right to complain, if another fill the throne of affection he has thus abdicated? Yet, even in this situation, a truely virtuous woman will preserve her own fame inviolate, since there is an awful reverence and respect attending virtue, which the most bold, presuming libertine dares not invade, or violate. She carries on her arm the gorgon shield, which strikes each rash beholder dumb. There is a radiant glory shining round her head, which proves to all the true divinity within.--- As the sun's purer rays are not polluted

polluted when they fall amidst the mire and filth; so the truely virtuous mind will remain untainted amidst the loose and vicious, and she may enjoy, in spite of every circumstance, the heartfelt delight of seeing her little beauteous cherubs around her knee, without one pang of conscience interfering on her side, to cast a gloom on the transports of a tender, honourable mother.

A husband and wife, who profess a mutual attachment, should reciprocally rectify their opinions, correct their bad habits, assist their

their laudable attempts, soften their afflictions, multiply their enjoyments, moderate the exultation of success, and dissipate the gloom of disappointment. Then should we behold more instances of connubial felicity, and have less frequent accounts of lovely women abandoning their families, and consigning themselves to everlasting infamy, and their husbands, parents, and innocent children, to the pity and disgrace a wife, a daughter, and a mother's conduct has brought upon them!

All

All men are not capable of enjoying the pure delights of family harmony; its transports are reserved for superior minds; how can it exist in a heart habitually cold, unfeeling, and selfish?---how can it animate the breast of the miser, whose happiness is centered in the possession of useless wealth; whose liveliest fears are excited by the probability of its diminution? The lover of dissipation is equally incapable of a strong and lasting affection: he is engrossed by luxury and fashion; he looks out of his family and himself for enjoyment, for

he knows not the inestimable value of domestic happiness, or mental pleasures: but the prudent wife, to fix the wayward and inconstant heart of man, should, even in the most confidential moments of love, be as careful to maintain the charms and respectability of her character, as if she were certain that her bosom-friend, the sole possessor of her youthful tenderness, would sometime prove inconstant.

How imprudent is that woman, who, depending on the strength of her own heart and principles,

principles, admits to her breast the delusions of platonic love; an error fatal to many others besides the unfortunate heroine of the following pages; who, with the most refined ideas of virtue and propriety, have, by a mistaken reliance on their own strength of virtue, fallen victims to this dangerous meteor, which has left the miserable object no future prospect, but what is dark and dismal; no friendly glimpse of light, not even the glow-worm's faint uncertain glimmer, to shew the narrow path of female reputation, which, when once quitted, is *ne-*

ver

ver more to be regained by the giddy, unthinking female, who has quitted it for a moment, and, in so doing, has resigned the direct road of respectability, honour, and, above all, the gratifying ideas which, however wayward and rugged it may be, will, without doubt, make us support the mortifications we are doomed to meet, with the delightful idea that no crime of our own has occasioned them, and that we have not precipitated ourselves into disgrace and misfortune.

Happy are those persons whose

love

love is the groundwork of esteem in the married life; it is undoubtedly the most essential requisite. Without this, it is only a bargain and compact; a tyrant, perhaps, on the man's part, and a slavery on the woman's, who is, alas! but too ready to fly from bondage. It is love only that cements the hearts; and where that union is wanting, it is but a shadow, a carcass of marriage. It should be the study of women to preserve this flame, that, like the vestal fire, it may never go out; and, to that end, carefully to guard it from all those things

which

which are naturally apt to extinguish it; which every act that takes off mutual confidence, will, by degrees, bring about.

A married woman, under no circumstance whatsoever, should encourage any male friend. Her husband, if tender and affectionate, has that sole prerogative vested in himself; if otherwise, for her own honour, she should avoid a connection of the sort; for, however innocent of heart she may be, she must not provoke an assault: she who exposes herself

to

to receive it, is far removed from safety. The female who lends a patient ear to praises of her wit, or beauty, intends at first, perhaps, only to gratify her vanity; but when she is once charmed with that Siren's song, bewitched with that flattery, she insensibly declines in her domestic duties, and feels a too partial kindness for that man she weakly supposes loves her so much; and when that spark shall be blown up by perpetual remonstrance of passion, and perhaps the little romantic artifices which man can so well invent, it may, in a moment,

burst

burst to an unquenchable flame, to the everlasting ruin of both her virtue and peace. Let no woman, therefore, presume upon the innocence of her first intentions; she may as well, upon the confidence of a sound constitution, enter a pest-house, and converse with the plague, whose contagion does not more subtilely insinuate itself than the false idea of platonic love, which often lights up a flambeau to direct the sentimental heart through the labyrinth of indiscretion.

It is the business of a pilot to discover

discover shoals, rocks, and quicksands, in order to land his passengers in safety. I shall take pains to hang out lights; but if those who sail after me, will rather choose to be stranded (where I have given them a signal of danger) than follow my course, their shipwreck is not to be imputed to me, who lead them.

DANGERS THROUGH LIFE:

A NOVEL.

LETTER I.

Mrs. Delmond to Lady Warwick her daughter.

Springfield.

I AM almost angry with myself, for not having written to my beloved Cecilia before now; but she knows that on my arrival here I must have had ten thousand things to do, be-

sides those everlasting accounts to settle, which is almost an endless business. I found every thing, however, in the best order imaginable: I already begin to feel myself at home, and my affection has seized upon the first quiet minute, and hastens to converse with you. I have a great mind to scold you though, for not having followed me hither.

What have you to do in London, at this season of the year, when the country is dressed in the bright garb of spring? You, particularly, who are so extremely dissipated in the winter, require the calmness and repose of the country; the air one breathes in it refreshes the blood, establishes the health, and supplies a fund to be prodigal of

again

again in the winter, with a little more impunity.

Your masquerades, your balls, your operas, and late suppers, alarm and afflict me. When I know that you are sitting up, I cannot sleep myself. Our vigils have different causes, though they produce the same effect; amusement breaks in upon your rest, and the tenderest anxiety disturbs mine. In my partial ideas, you have the sweetest eyes in the world, and yet I have often seen them so sunk, so languid, that they were enough to frighten me. I feel unhappy when I see them in that state; and though even then mine may tell me that you are charm-

ing, my heart, yes, my heart, denies you the compliment.

Our worthy old Rector has inquired very particularly about you; he has a great mind to convert you to his rigid way of thinking; he is, therefore, very sorry you did not visit me this spring; but he assures me, that you shall not escape from his fold; that he will save you in spite of yourself, and fully convince you that your London pleasures deserve not so flattering an epithet.

Do not you, Cecilia, think, that he has engaged in a difficult undertaking? and that the power of custom will plead more forcibly in their favour than all

the eloquence he can exert against them?

He has lately given us some excellent discourses upon the danger of indulging our passions; upon the evils that they bring upon us, and the insufficiency of those enjoyments which they so deceitfully promise. He has spoken extremely well upon these subjects: he is really a very worthy man, and sincerely animated with a zeal for religion and virtue. He takes as much pains in instructing the consciences of his village flock, as if he had the souls of the most illustrious sinners to answer for. Your London preachers would be SHINING LIGHTS; our good pastor does not seek to dazzle, but to

lead

lead the blind—the former may be the better *evangelist*, but he is the true *apostle*.

A-propos! Farmer Lambert has been to see me; he brought his daughter with him, the pretty Jane, that you used to call your LITTLE FRIEND. She was decked out for the visit, without having the least occasion for ornaments. She is a perfect well-made young woman, with eyes sparkling from the vivacity of youth, a complexion carnationed by health and nature, and lips like opening roses moist with morning dew.

She has a lover that might make a more flourishing picture of her; but I

would

would rather portion than paint her. She has a look of sense that engages my regard, and I am assured that her conduct is answerable to it. She is proposed as a model to all the girls hereabouts of her own age. In her rustic habiliments, she attracts the respect and attention of all who approach her, and I intend marrying her to the man she loves, immediately. He is the son of an honest man in my neighbourhood; who has succeeded to his father's industry, and inherits also his integrity. I feel myself interested for these young people; they shall be married from Springfield; and I shall be delighted with having their happiness commence under my roof and auspices.

Such,

Such, my dearest child, are the innocent cares and amusements which occupy the peaceful days I pass in this retirement. Yours may perhaps be passed more lively, but not so permanent. Are they capable of leaving such soft impressions on your mind? Now I hate that fatiguing vortex, that hurries you so about, that whirls you from chimera to chimera, and leaves behind it nought but void, giddiness, and disgust.

Seen in perspective, the world appears an Eden; but, nearer viewed, we find it an abyss, where each delight conceals a danger, and every pleasure forebodes a pain. In this great gulph, my love, lie certain hidden rocks, which

which I will not, *dare* not, fear for you; though youthful follies drive the bark towards them, the proper pride and spirit of a well-tutored mind preserve it from a wreck. With the most lively spirit, you possess a steady heart; the first may lead you into a labyrinth, but the latter is a clue that will retrieve you from the maze.

I know in what I have said, my faith is very great upon this point, for I am certain I should die with grief, should you compel me to renounce it. But yet, my dearest Cecilia, how often do appearances undo those whose hearts cannot assure them? The lures of coquetry, though laid for others, too often ensnare ourselves: we only

wish admiration, or rather, know not what we would have. But the vanity of the other sex, and the envy of our own, make us pay dearly for the unmeaning gratification we seek. The men boast; the women calumniate; we exclaim against their injustice, we weep, and we resent; what we considered but as an amusement of the mind, though the channel of reflection returns envenomed to the heart: we would preserve our circles and our credit at the same time; this we find difficult: our principles struggle with our passion, are weakened by the strife: at length we become discouraged, our resentments against the world grow sharper, and our imprudence stronger; till even virtue, which should be the consolation,

consolation, becomes the torment of our hearts.

Credit my experience, my dear daughter, and I shall cherish this treasure of my age, if it can save you from the perils that attend on yours. I began to live in the world very early, and thanks to your beloved father, (whose loss I shall regret all my future days,) I have been ever happy and tranquil; I have, therefore, had leisure for observation and reflection, and have always pitied those women who were not so fortunate as myself. I do not speak of those who have transgressed the bounds of that modesty which is the highest charm that nature can bestow upon a sex, whom she seems in some

sort

sort to have made the guardians of public virtue, and domestic bliss: those unfortunates deserve the ills they suffer; and the rigours of society are perfectly excuseable, when exerted to avenge the cause of decency; to punish the neglect of duty, and to stigmatize those who have strayed from the paths of honour.

I mean here only to speak of those warm, but weak characters, who, being too susceptible of impressions, may be seduced without being debauched, and led astray without tumbling down the precipice; who are liable to failings, but incapable of vice; and subject to indiscretions that become dangerous to repeat. These I own are the

the things I fear for you. If honour survives them, peace of mind must suffer, and it is a fond mother's wish that yours might never suffer.—

Frown not, my dearest Cecilia, at the seeming strictness of my morals; they are not severe: I am far from being one of those harsh pedants, who censure the pleasures forbidden to their age. Enjoy all those advantages that youth and innocence can claim. Your charms are due to society, and I see with pride that they embellish it. Amuse yourself; but suffer not the quality nor the excess of your dissipations, to injure your happiness or health. Con verse but little with our young men of rank and fashion, they are most of them

them vain, inconsiderately presumptuous, and indelicate.—Indeed their manners are so little similar with your own native purity of mind, that I do not think I require too great a sacrifice.—

However, I confess, that such fops are seldom dangerous; one may associate with them free from apprehension—they leave no trace behind. Your female connections are of much greater importance to you, the world will judge of you by them: they stamp the character, and ought therefore to be selected with prudence. I would wish you, my love, to be frequently seen with some of those women of fashion who take the lead, whose good sense

and

and amiable manners amply compensate for the loss of those charms which time has robbed them of. By sheltering yourself under their protection, and engaging the good wishes and opinion of them and their friends, you may allow yourself many harmless indulgences, that might probably hurt you without this little scheme of policy; and which may be highly necessary to shield you against the watchfulness of envy and malice, and the numberless hazards and indiscretions of youth.

Under such a matronage as I have pointed out, even your pleasures will acquire a character for propriety, which ought never to abandon you. You will not be confounded with the

crowd

crowd of contemptible women, who are united by dissipation only, and disjoined by rivalship, who are the dearest friends one day, and detest each other to-morrow; who are continually exhibiting their vanity to the public; and conclude their course at last, with being deprived even of the pretensions of being vain.—

Rather attach yourself to very young women who are yet docile, and have not triumphed over the natural instinctive blush of modesty, than to those hardened coquets, who are rendered furious by the perception of their declining charms, the loss of the adoration they formerly enjoyed, and the doleful prospect of being totally ne-

glected

glected. These latter naturally abhor all those whose youth and freshness insult their masks, and afford men an opportunity of making comparisons so much to their disadvantage. Their very souls are wounded by the sight of opening beauties and unaffected graces; they rail against the present decline of taste, and being no longer able to attract admirers, they seek for victims, and are resolved to be feared, since they cannot be loved.

Fly then, my child, if you do not wish to fall a prey to the utmost reproach, and scandal, of every kind that rage or rivalry can invent. There is nothing more implacable, than mortified vanity; especially when it has lost those temporary

porary

porary merits, which might formerly have supported its claim. I do not, because I hope it is needless, recommend you to guard your heart against certain attachments, too apt to rise to a passion always dishonourable to those engagements and duties, which though circumstances may for a while suspend the exercise of, nothing should ever cancel or annul. Once more, I rely upon the elevation of your own sentiments, and am perfectly tranquil upon this subject.

I know all the reason you have to be displeased with Sir Charles Warwick, I cannot reflect on them without feeling pity for you, and I can't write against him. All your friends are interested

terested for your fate; do not render it more unhappy, than it is already; teach your husband to blush for his conduct, by obliging him to respect the propriety of yours. There may come a time when your natural and legal ties shall recover all their force. —Errors on one side, can only loosen; there must be faults on both, to dissolve them.—Without mutual misconduct, reason and these united interests necessarily recall the estranged husband back again to the forsaken wife. How will you then enjoy those sacrifices you may now make! How highly will you then applaud yourself, for having preserved your vows inviolate!—

Ill befall the woman who degrades herself,

herself, forgets her duty, and becomes dependent on one, whose happiness is derived from her disgrace, whose conduct authorizes the contempt even of the man who debases her, by robbing her of every claim of esteem; that best resource in all misfortune! And what, gracious heaven! are the temporary adorations of a vain precarious lover who is only attached by pleasure, who will be led by the same motive to another object, the moment that occasion offers?

What should induce him to be constant? His promises? he makes a jest of them.—Your tears? he triumphs in them.—And the unfortunate creature he next attacks, soon in his eyes eclipses the

the wretch he has both dishonoured and forsaken. I have grown warm insensibly, by speaking on this topic, though I well know there is no need to urge your attention to it.

Tell me every thing about your dear children; they, my Cecilia, you will consider, are not chargeable with their father's misconduct or neglect of you; love the dear babies, and inspire them early with principles of rectitude and truth: a mother's lessons make deep pressions, because they flow from the heart.—Watch over their education yourself: in the discharge of this duty you will find endless pleasures, and have your cares repaid a thousand fold. —Yes, my child, I wish to recall you

to those primitive and delightful employments, which the present round of dissipation our young mothers give into, render both irksome and unfashionable. Masters are necessary to accomplish our children, but we should reserve the forming their hearts to ourselves alone.—

Adieu, my dearest daughter, read my letter with reflection,—remember that you have not a more tender, a more indulgent friend in the whole world than me, and that my sentiments can only be inspired by the ardent desire of seeing you as happy as you deserve to be.

ALICE DELMOND.

LETTER II.

Ismena de Alvira to Lord Clermont.

Rose-Hill Cottage, Richmond.

YOU asked me yesterday, my Lord, from whence arose my sadness, and whether I had any reason to be displeased with you. I can scarcely persuade myself that *you* have asked me such a question, or indeed that such

such a one could be addressed to me.— You know that I am naturally grave! a series of misfortunes which assailed me, even in my tenderest infancy, has diffused an air of melancholy over my countenance; but the expression is involuntary, and of course without meaning; nor will I permit you to misinterpret it.—

Can I be distressed, or afflicted, when with thee! while I enjoy thy presence, and read my happiness in thine eyes? Have I another good on earth, but thee? and are not the tender ties of our union, those only which attach me even to life? I still endure it—I yet subsist. Let this convince you how dear you are to me.—

The

The weakness of your passion only can induce you to doubt the strength of your Ismena's. You ask me if I have any reason to complain of you? Ought you to think, or fear, that I have any? Has your conduct justified that apprehension?

Attend to me—Providence seems to have marked my existence by sufferings only, and endowed me with fortitude, merely to enable me to struggle with misfortune. Married but six months, the happiest union was dissolved by the death of a husband, whom I most tenderly loved. I saw my beloved father fall a sacrifice to the virulence of party rage.—I saw him expire

within my fainting arms, whilst even his gaolers wept his fate!

My early tears flowed in prison, for the miseries of a parent, whose virtues merited a throne. My mother still was left me; a mother whom I almost worshipped! who shared in all my sorrows, and mingled her widowed tears with mine. I have lost her, too! you were present at her death. With her last sigh, she formed and blessed our union.—I have now nought left within this wide world, but thee!

Our hymeneal torch was lighted on a tomb. The same priest who performed the last offices to a dying parent, sanctioned

tioned our vows, not the less sacred for not having been published to your family, and the world; I am far from wishing to make public the rights I have given you over my fond heart, I cannot confine myself within those formal precepts, by which ordinary souls are bounded. I know myself your wife, and am contented that even in thy arms, I dare invoke the Supreme Being as a witness of my innocence, and offer him thy happiness as a security for my own virtue.—Fear not, with these sentiments I shall ever render you uneasy, by betraying fear, or impatience—that would debase us both. I am wholly thine, even to my latest breath. I cherish my *duty* and *affection* at once, and desire no other tie

over you than *yours*. You are at present dependent on your father—you have duties to fulfil—observe them all. I would wish my idea to be ever present to your thoughts, but never to become an obstacle to your actions.—

Learn to know the soul of a Spanish woman. My heart rests secure in itself, for security is the fruit of esteem. —If I could suspect you for a moment, that moment would imbitter all my days. The calm which I now enjoy, is but the repose of the strongest sensibility; if a storm were to succeed, it would be horrible.—Oh my busband, what barbarian would labour to destroy the happiness he has himself conferred? You have created a new world

for

for me, and placed me in what part of it you pleased; where I remain in perfect acquiescence, without regretting any thing else; this garden, these flowers, which I fondly cultivate; these shady arbours, which conceal us from enquiring eyes;—these are my treasures—I despise all others, and disdain every thing that is not thee. I am enchanted with my solitude; when you appear, my pleasures are complete; and even in your absence, your idea can replace them. Solely occupied by that, the smile of happiness sits on my lips; I consecrate every moment of the day, at night it mixes with my dreams, and I awake with joy to think on it again. I congratulate myself on knowing, loving, and existing, but for you, and on

living

living so near the centre of splendour and gaiety, insensible to its tumultuous pleasures.

Would you change the happiness I owe to you alone, into an everlasting sorrow, or drown these eyes in tears, which you now fill with love? No, I have not, nor ever shall have reason to reproach you.—My pride will not suffer me to fear a rival, for where is the woman that can love like me? I expect you, my beloved, on your return from Brighton: but wherefore has your last absence been longer than usual?

I know not how to quit you, but—adieu, my soul's idol, adieu!

ISMENA.

LETTER III.

The Marquis of Belvill to Lady Warwick.

The Abbey, ——

WITHIN this fortnight, my dear Lady Warwick, I have made the most profound reflections. Your conduct to me, and the unabated rigour with which you have repaid my ardent passion, might naturally have been supposed

supposed to leave some secret venom rankling at my heart, and have made resentment succeed to love,—but I feel no such sentiment; there is something in your Ladyship's character, I know not what, that has the power of disarming me. I have formed my resolution, it is violent but steady. I sacrifice myself to your caprice, or to your reason, if you choose that term; and since you are averse to love, I consent for your sake, to sink into the languor and insipidity of friendship.

This is the first time that I ever thought of accepting such moderate terms from a woman of your youth, beauty, and accomplishments.—The sacrifice is painful—I know it—no matter—I submit, and this very compli-

ance

ance ought to be considered the more extraordinary, as I am the man in the world, perhaps, who most sensibly feels the mortification of a disappointment. Behold me, then, your friend! what a singular title! I fear you will find me a little awkward, on my first setting out. There is something alarming in attempting a part one has never performed; but time reconciles us to every thing. In ten or a dozen years, it will become quite easy for the rest of our lives. I hope you will allow that you have got off upon very reasonable terms. I am not so dangerous as many women would have me thought, —let them but ask your Ladyship, and I doubt not but you will kindly un-

 deceive

deceive them, and vindicate me from a character I so little deserve.

Well, Lady Warwick, have you yet a bad opinion of me? and will you inhumanly refuse me the confidence I claim? I have bought it dear enough to be covetous of it. A man, to be upon any terms with a woman, must possess her hand, her esteem, or her heart.—I think I need not fear being taxed with presumption, when I only claim a confidence of the latter from you.

You are perfectly sensible, that your resistance to receive my attentions, may be attributed to various motives,

an

and even perverseness might perhaps claim a share. Women (I speak philosophically and generally) are by no means capable of that disinterested heroism, that severe fortitude that rejects our addresses, and resents our solicitation—these gigantic efforts are far beyond them; they are not the dupes of stoicism, believe me:—our reason may deceive us, but instinct is their guide; and their defence, I fancy, depends oftener upon foreign alliances, than their own force.—And when ever they reject the addresses of a man who knows how to attack them, it is because they have already surrendered themselves to a WEAKNESS that lends them STRENGTH to resist, while the merit of their denial is imputed to higher principles!

principles! And whenever a woman rejects a triumph, is it to be presumed, at least, that she has some private indemnity in reserve, to console her for her public sacrifice? These are but doubts I propose; for I myself believe most stedfastly in virtue.—But there are certain infidels (one sometimes see monsters) who would imagine they discovered in my defeat the certain proof of another's success.

And now, my dear Lady Warwick, if your affections happen to be pre-engaged, (for all things are possible,) who shall pretend to condemn the true celestial union of our souls, or restrain their innocent effusions? To dissem- with a lover is usual, and perhaps necessary.

cessary.—Women have a kind of policy upon this article, as reputable as ancient.—But the *friend* I like to think so, reigns over a heart without disguise; he is admitted into its most secret thoughts, and sees clearly through all the complication of motives, the decency of appearances, and the reserves of coquetry.

Such, divine Cecilia, is the province to which I now remit my pretensions—it is but common justice in you to attend it—and the more parsimonious you are of your FAVOURS, the more prodigal you ought to be of your CONFIDENCE. You may rely on my discretion—I offer you the same portion of it I should have used as a successful lo-

ver,

ver, under another title, notwithstanding the insipidity of the character, and the difference of the rewards.

How worthy of envy will be that happy mortal, whom you will distinguish by a preference! But the oftener I look round your circle of admirers, I find myself still more at a loss, on whom to fix my suspicions. It cannot be Colonel ——? Or who knows but you may have been struck by his horse-like shape, his absurd prodigality, his ridiculous importance, or his profound erudition upon the article of opera intelligence and ball-room *étiquettes*?

As to Lord John —— he has youth, and freshness, and that kind of NAIVE, which in men oftentimes degenerates

into

into sentiment.—Besides he is endowed with a most agreeable stutter, and sometimes that is sufficient to turn the scale in favour of the stammerer; for an hesitation of speech has so much the appearance of that confusion which arises from a respectful love, that though his puny Lordship is an hour getting out a sentence; there may perhaps be a sort of eloquence in his hesitation, which cannot fail of making him amends.

I do not talk of Lord Cleremont—I have ever formally refused to introduce him to your Ladyship. I don't like such offices, as I know full well the many complaints and reproaches we draw upon ourselves, by taking up-

on

on us to introduce such young men into life; and therefore, if you should have any reason to be displeased with him, I shall not have the mortification of being the cause of dissatisfaction. For though he has a thousand agreeable accomplishments, and even some excellent qualities, I do not think he is the kind of man that could succeed in pleasing you—he is too much admired, too much followed! A man so universally received, is not the person that could engage your heart: I know you better than you imagine, and very sincerely approve the propriety of your sentiments.

Adieu, my sweet friend; I propose myself the honour of kissing your fair hand

hand on Thursday, and entering upon the serious offices of my department: if you favour me with a line, it may serve to lead me into the style of friendship, and rid me of that embarrassment which an unfortunate person must feel, who has not yet had the advantages of being initiated into the mysteries of so seraphic a sentiment.

LETTER IV.

Lady Warwick to the Marquis of Belvill.

I CONFESS to you, my Lord, that your letter amused me vastly. I am quite delighted at the kind of style in which you have written to me; now it is infinitely superior to your love-letters, for in displaying that passion, you become

become awkward, by the mere tone of too much address.—You should remember the true science of a lover, is to speak from his feelings, not to seek for correct expressions; to be perfectly sincere, to surrender himself up entirely to his passion, and to paint his sentiments without the smallest touch of art. —A flow of words will never atone for the dryness of the heart; and if we are not caught by the emotion, we are always armed against the design.—A sigh, a tear, an expressive silence, is more powerful with us, than all the vain parade of gallantry, with which only such women have been seduced, as were scarce worth the gaining.

Why, my Lord, your expressions of

love

love seem but like the recollection of a former passion impressed on a refined understanding; and I am transported at finding you return to your natural style. You are sublime in irony—even I, who have been the object of it, allow your superiority in that species of writing.—I have but one thing to object to, my Lord, on this occasion, which is your not having been able to conceal the pique which torments you, under those artful expressions.

Seriously, you are exasperated that, with my giddy manners, I had penetration enough not to become the dupe of a passion which you never felt.—I have robbed you of the pleasure of deceiving me.—This cries aloud for vengeance!

geance! and I cannot conceive it possible, that after my treating you so abominably, you can have the goodness to offer me your friendship *de bon cœur*. What! the gay, the inconstant Marquis of Belvill! he become the platonic of a woman of twenty! Reflect upon the mortifying inference to be deduced from so humble a concession, I beseech your Lordship.

Unluckily, too, I am so unfortunate as not to have a secret worth confiding. Attend to this: after having been a lover without consequence, you run the hazard of becoming a friend without employ.—This would be multiplying disgrace on you, and must certainly end in your hating me most mortally;

tally; and where, alas! shall I find the means of consolation for such a misfortune? I am quite aware of your incredulity, you will never be persuaded that a woman of my age, who leads a life of such dissipation, is not under the necessity of giving ease to her heart, by reposing a confidence in the indulgent bosom of friendship. But allow me to tell you, my Lord, you have as yet only met with women of intrigue. Such indeed may have much to tell, and much more to conceal. It is not, however, fair to judge of the whole sex by general ideas; such men of professed gallanty as you affect to be deemed, are curious philosophers; because a few silly women of fashion, who have neither prudence nor decency,

tender,

tender by instinct, and libertine through habit; because such unfortunate women, I say, accept, and quit you, re-accept, and requit you again; because the notoriety of your perfidies and their own misconduct, have equally consigned them to that infamy, which they dare brave; you presume to comprehend us all under such stigmatized exceptions:—But learn, my Lord, from me, and remember it, if you can, that there are yet in the world, estimable women, whose charms demand your admiration, and whose manners challenge your respect: of the first class, are those who combat their inclinations, and triumph over them. The others with less fortitude, or more sensibility, have yet continued to render

their

their weakness respectable, by elevating their passions to a sublime sentiment, and by never forfeiting that innate chastity of the soul, or that blushing modesty, which, even in their failures, seem but like sacrifices offered up to virtue.—

My stars, forgive me! I have been reasoning? I am sure, you as little expected, as I declare I designed it. Adieu, my Lord! you are really more susceptible of friendship than one would think; but I desire only one proof of yours—Shew more indulgence to my friends; believe me, that a turn for ridicule, is not a character to be vain of; if a great wit has not a little wisdom joined with

it,

it, to direct when, where, and how, to apply it; it is like wild fire that flies, it roves, runs, hissing about, and blows up every thing that comes in its way, without respect or discrimination.

Notwithstanding the giddiness of my manners, I am steady in my attachments; I must therefore make a compromise for my friends in this article. I shall most freely forgive all your ingenious sarcasms, provided they are only pointed at myself; as I have the vanity to think myself responsible for your wit, though I confess myself a bankrupt with regard to your proffered love.

I know that few women in my situation would have ventured to address your Lordship in reply to your last letter; but it is my humour, and I do not apprehend the least danger in indulging it.

And have the honour to remain, &c.

CECILIA WARWICK.

LETTER V.

From the Marquis of Belville to Mr. Davies.

WELL, Davies! what is become of the enterprise I gave you in charge? Have your scouts surrounded the camp? May we hope to conquer this redoubted Spanish beauty?

You must contrive to get intelligence from within and without; post your Arguses; pay well your spies; bribe her men-servants; and make use of those arts of seduction, which, thanks to my instructions, you so amply possess, to gain her women;—become at once her lover, and you hold her at discretion. Scatter gold by handfuls: you shall not want the means. One must be prodigal on such occasions, and you know that I am grateful to those who serve me well. But above all take care to guard my secret. If our attempts should fail, I would not suffer the disgrace of being foiled. By no means name either Lord Cleremont or me.

You

You grow old, you rogue you; you no longer possess that brisk and active impudence, which characterised your youth. You repose too much under the shade of your laurels. I heard a ridiculous thing of you yesterday—that you begin to feel compunctions. What the plague ails the man? Have you been scared by ghosts? or are you turning methodist? But make an end of my business, and you may turn what you please. I need your assistance and address for the present, and pay dear enough in conscience, for the postponement of your repentance to the future.

I expect to hear from you quickly, and that you will serve me rather bet-

ter than you did with the little Opera-girl; but for the slowness of your motions she would have been under my *protection* a fortnight sooner.

Exert your energies, Mr. Davies; this adventure may do you an infinite deal of honour. We shall see if you have still a passion for glory, by your being still capable of emulation.

BELVILLE.

LETTER VI.

The Marquis of Belville to Lord Clere-mont.

I SOUGHT you yesterday, my dear fellow, every where in vain. I went to the Opera, but you were not there; nor did I see Lady Warwick, which makes me imagine that you

 were

were both engaged in adjusting your preliminaries; try to abridge them as much as possible, and avoid remaining a long eternity in the dull uniformity of the same situation. We would all require to be happy—to which variety is requisite; this is the maxim of women—it ought also to be ours. Remember the rule I have so often laid down to you in such affairs. One should hurry on the conquest of your slow reflecting fair ones, and only temporize with those that are too lively. Impatience becomes your age; be delicate in your address, but brisk in your action. This is the whole art of gallantry at twenty-five.

I have reflected upon your passion for

for the fair Spaniard, and see plainly that it is nothing more than an attachment formed by habit; you have had enough to grow tired of it already. I advise you to think seriously about it. An intrigue of this kind may injure your advancement in life, must interfere with your pleasures, and prevent your success in twenty adventures that may be each more brilliant than the former; besides that it will spread such a varnish of stupid constancy over your character, as may render you despicable in the eyes of women of the world. They think no man faithful to one mistress, but for want of merit to succeed with another.

If you would not break with her abruptly, (though a punctilio of this kind is but a sort of sentimental folly) begin by lessening the frequency and length of your visits, and so prepare her by degrees, since you have not spirit enough to forsake her at once. Emancipate yourself from the Spanish yoke, if it were only from a national heat, and a spirit of patriotism; for of what nature can your engagements with her be? Pleasure is the only tye I know of, with the sex, and when we begin to find it fail, our attachment ceases of course. Fortify yourself with these principles.

I go to-morrow to the abbey, and order

der your letter to be forwarded by my porter, and relieve the anxiety I feel on your account.

I have got rid of my little Opera-dance. I gave her up to the Duke of ——, who won last night a thousand guineas. I have quit rid of a plague, and obliged them both. Do the same with your pretty Spanish friend, and rely on the friendship and advice of,

BELVILLE.

LETER VII.

Mr. Davies to the Marquis of Belville.

Richmond.

I DARE not appear before your Lordship; I have already exhausted all the resources of my art, without being able to promise you the least hope of success. This Donna's house, as

as her servants call her, is a kind of fortress, inaccessible to all our approaches. Her man does not understand English, and her women are discreet and sensible. There is an air of virtue runs through the whole family, which does not encourage the smallest hope, for carrying on our project. To complete our defeat; she is guarded by a large English mastiff, too, who seems to have taken a particular dislike to my emissaries. This very day he was near devouring one of them, who had disguised himself like a pedlar. One would almost imagine that this Hesperian dragon had been aware of our intentions.

I have, however, very nearly expended

pended the fund that your Lordship intrusted to my management; it has been chiefly dissipated in small expences; and I see, with grief, that we shall be foiled in this great enterprise. Yet, my Lord, I flatter myself that you will not accuse me of the slightest negligence. As for the remorse you rally me upon, I am too much a philosopher to give way to such a weakness; so that you may be perfectly easy upon that article; as I trust that I shall finish my course as I began it, under your Lordship's auspices. You have treated me too well to permit my being ungrateful; and if Heaven spares me life, I shall grow grey in a profession, which, while it ensures the pleasures of my noble benefactor, enriches

riches the possessor. I am with these sentiments, and the most profound respect,

Your Lordship's most devoted,

T. DAVIES.

LETTER VIII.

The Marquis of Belville to the Honourable George Beaumont.

WELL, my dear Beaumont, how does the Spanish climate agree with you? Amidst all the din of war, you must surely regret dear London, the delights of Bond-Street, our ope-

ras,

ras, assemblies; that extreme degree of corruption at which we are arrived, our privileged gallantries, our scandalous anecdotes, the insolent pride of our chaste women, and the affected prudery of our frail-ones.

Would you believe it, I am at this instant but just escaped from the ridiculous embarrassment of a serious attachment? I absolutely felt the most dangerous symptoms—my star declined, and sunk from its ascendant. I became the dupe of the slightest artifice; the martyr of the most obvious coquetry!—I dwindled into a simple swain; and only owe my escape to one of those master-strokes of art, which can

MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI

can convert the mortification of the heart, into a triumph for its vanity.

The fair-one who brought me within a hair-breadth of ruin, is the *charming* Lady Warwick,—that epithet which we bestow so liberally, and frequently apply so ill, seems to have been framed peculiarly for her. It is impossible for any one to be more so: nor can all the efforts of art, render any person constantly worthy of that description. Her powers of captivating are sudden and lasting. I have felt it by experience. I have admired her for three months entire, with an ardour beyond example. Imagine to yourself a mouth with all the smiles of infancy

playing

playing round it; with eyes almost endowed with intuition, of tint cerulean, but rendered hazle by expression, armed with eye-lashes, that strive in vain to veil the rays that sparkle through them; a skin of the most dazzling whiteness, all its own; arms rounded by the graces; a foot that a Chinese might envy; and above all, a form light, elegant, and full of softness, yet truly majestic, when she would assume a dignity.

To these transcendant gifts of nature, you must add the most refined morality; a wit of prompt conception, free delivery, and adorned with every grace of elocution; the most sportive fancy,

fancy, tempered by the strictest manners of modesty and decorum; a species of coquetry that captivates and perplexes you; the most lively sallies of humour; a caprice which interests you, a warmth of sentiment which sometimes carries with it a shade of melancholy, which engages your sympathy the more from its being impossible to divine the cause; a soul both noble, generous, and benevolent; a creative and romantic imagination, which insures its pleasures within itself, while others search abroad to find them, and supplies enjoyments beyond the bounds of nature.

She was only sixteen when she was married

married to Sir Charles Warwick. In the space of three years, during which his constancy was rather doubtful, she brought him three children, but from that æra he has indulged his libertinism among those pliant fair ones, whom we bribe, worship, and despise; worthless but pleasant merchandizes, that pass from hand to hand without engaging our hearts; whose ready arms receive our idle youth, our faithless husbands, and all credulous strangers, whom they make a point of ruining, in order to distinguish themselves, and leave a fit example to their successors.

Sir Charles is merely libertine; this is the utmost of his offence. He is not,

not, indeed, one of those over-fond husbands, who surfeiting themselves of the matrimonial banquet, grow churlish to every other guest, and become tyrants over every action and passion of their wives. Marriages, under our present notions, neither are, or ought to be, any thing more than a kind of mutual exchange, which facilitates circulation, and increases the general commerce of society.

From this principle, Warwick seems to have acted; and though he has too much good sense to be solely devoted to his charming wife, which would be a ridiculous piece of superstition in this enlightened age, he has, however, the merit of behaving with the utmost

propriety

propriety towards her in every other instance—he is neither jealous nor tyrannical; but when in town, lives with Lady Warwick, like a tender and respectful friend; he even pays her some attentions, which though our present modes may tolerate, they do not exact; and after his horses, his dogs, and mistresses, the elegant Cecilia is most assuredly the thing he seems to love best in the world: besides, his rank in the army obliges him to be frequently absent; all which circumstances render him the most convenient husband that ever was framed, for the purposes of her admirers; and, therefore, whenever he sets out upon his circuits, he carries with him a thousand benedictions to prosper him in his progress.

It is then that all the projects and pretensions of all the rivals who dispute the heart of his lovely neglected wife, become warm and animated; their gallantries and assiduities are, I know, rather displeasing to the good old lady, her mother, who possesses a great power over the mind of my enchantress: she certainly is in her way a very respectable character, and one whom I revere beyond expression, after my fashion of adoring virtue; but they have separate establishments, and God be praised, I seldom see the fine, tall, edifying figure of Mrs. Delmond in the drawing-room of her daughter; indeed I am sure to have the vapours for a fortnight after I have had the misfortune of meeting her.

You

You see then that Lady Warwick is as much at her liberty as a pretty woman can be, and I assure you she makes good use of it; she is at every public place, at every ball, and in every drawing-room—she seems to multiply herself, to be every where at once, and is every where envied by the women, and adored by the men; attracting the latter, and laughing at the former; but seeming, however, rather to enjoy the jealousy of her own sex, than the admiration of ours.

With qualities so sympathetic with my own, could I foresee that she must be the rock on which the glory of all my former ventures should be shipwrecked?—Yet this has been the case.

 I mined

I mined my approaches, erected my batteries, and formed my plans of operation, with the most perfect generalship, yet none of them succeeded. I received, indeed, some flattering civilities from her, which encouraged my hopes at first, till I found I could boast of no exclusive property in them. But I have not temper enough for a skirmish, and choose always to press the action, equally impatient to enjoy the triumph—and resign the prize.

But Lady Warwick did not allow me time to make the trial—the subalterns in gallantry boast of conquests which they never made; while we, of a superior rank, find a consolation even in the confession of our

defeat;

defeat; we rest upon our former trophies; the glories of our past victories warrants our future success, and atones for the present mishap.—I am, therefore, not extremely discontented with myself, and could even raise the present siege, if I did not think it absolutely necessary to continue it for example sake. It would be extremely dangerous, my dear Beaumont, to suffer women to boast such a precedent, without punishing the aggressor, which every pretty woman may be deemed in one sense, at least; they who tempt and assail, may be properly considered as the authors of their own defeat.

There is another reason too for my

persevering—there are people who pretend to say that, under the appearances of levity and dissipation, she conceals the most solid principles; the most prudent reserve, with a gloomy virtue, that governs her mind, even in her gayest moments. If so, it is absolutely essential to herself to avoid suspicions that may arise against so mixed a character. I am satisfied with her having rejected me from caprice, but I will not suffer the idea of her having resisted from virtue; and as I have really an high esteem for her, I shall labour to convince her of her own weakness. Since I cannot win her myself, I will try to conquer her by proxy, at least. It will be in part a victory to defeat her obstinacy, though

one

one receives no other advantage from it. By this means I shall recover my tranquillity, save her character from the disgrace of suspicion, and give to the present age a woman who ought to be at once its model and its ornament.

I like the project, and will become answerable for its success. Our rebel beauty is not aware of the ambuscade I have formed against her, and which it will be lucky for her to fall into. About two months ago, I detached Lord Clermont to watch her motions; he has youth, an elegant form, and one of those countenances made up of mildness, sense, and sensibility, which is apt to impose on women, persuading them of every thing they say, and even

even of more than they express; and, by inflaming their imaginations, dispose them at length to hear, believe, and grant every thing; to these advantages are united a thousand agreeable qualifications; and he excels in all the exercises suited to his rank and age. As to his character, I think it sublime, as it happens to square exactly with my views. Easy in his temper, a little weak, open, unsuspecting, and sufficiently docile to the hand that governs him: in short, he seems to be the very person framed by nature for my purposes. The Duke, his father, is distantly related to me, and, on the return of Lord Clermont from his travels, requested I would take him under my protection;—I

obeyed

obeyed in the fullest sense of the word, and have introduced him to all the women of distinction who give *ton*; he is well received among them; they see he has wit and vivacity, with the most penetrating eyes, and hope in time to make something of him. His Lordship has lately been engaged in a duel, from which he extricated himself with a becoming spirit, and has received great honour from his conduct;—in a word, Clermont looks up to me, relies on my opinion and advice, and, as he is extremely grateful for the a tention I have shewn him, will be 'ed, I have little doubt, what lengths I please.

You will allow, that the supplying

Lady Warwick with such a *votary*, in the sense you and I understand adoration, is letting her off upon very easy terms truly. Let them say what they will, she must have had her attachments, though she may have, perhaps, conducted them with such secrecy and prudence as to escape the notice of the world—but that is no business of mine. It is necessary that this affair should be proclaimed aloud—I care not about the success—the publicity of it alone can satisfy my pique. I have introduced my second, my *compeer*, into every house where Lady Warwick is intimate. The Countess of ———, who is still as gay as if she was solicited to be so, has, at my request, in-

troduced

troduced this fascinating young man to my charmer, who has already been brought to act upon the defensive.

She affects an air of dislike towards him, or else seems not to take notice of him; scolds him without any cause, or else flirts away with any fool she meets, fancying, no doubt, by so doing, she conceals her tender prepossession towards him; while, on the contrary, these very manners betray that she is already entangled in my snare.

Her pretended coldness answers my wish, as it will serve to quicken Clermont, rendered supine and languid by the dullness of a twelvemonth's en-

gagement in another place. Lady Warwick seems rather to have piqued his vanity than touched his heart; and the activity of the former will probably answer my purpose more effectually than the most tender and unaffected movements of a real passion.

Now, my dear fellow, I have taken you behind the scenes, do you perceive the drift of my machinery?— The charming Warwick shall be brought to doat upon a man who is little more than indifferent towards her; and shall be thus punished, for her folly in rejecting me, by being necessarily obliged to regret me. Nor is this all I have in view—by giving Clermont employment about a woman

he

he does not love, I facilitate the means of robbing him of one he does; and she is, indeed, worth the hazard of the enterprise.

This woman is romance personified; she is young, elegantly made, fair, a Spaniard, and a widow. She has a beautiful cottage on the banks of the Thames, where I have wandered whole hours, to have the pleasure of gazing on her, unperceived; her countenance is serious, but noble; her look, though commanding, is blended with an expression of tenderness with sensibility; and over all her features, there is an air diffused that demands respect, with a soft melancholy, at the same time, which invites to love. In short, she is

really an interesting creature, and I think it possible for a man to be very much attached to her. She seems, moreover, to be endowed with a quickness of spirit in her looks and manner, with which I am delighted, as it is so admirably contrasted with the soft grace of her outward appearance.

In good faith, I am not much surprised that the simple Clermont should feel some remorse in deceiving her; I feared that I should never be able to have sufficiently detached him from her, to make him enter into my present plot. What signify my telling him that, confining himself to his pretty foreigner, with so short a distance from London, was absolutely devoting him-

self

self to banishment? he answers only with a sigh, and, though that is but a childish kind of reply, it sometimes confounds my eloquence. He pretends to tell me that his mistress is every thing that he could wish—that her person, wit, and character, are exactly suited to his taste and disposition—that she has surrendered herself to his passion, with such unfeigned confidence, that it would be the height of inhumanity to deceive her;—that she has no other friend or consolation upon earth but him. In short, there is no end of his arguments; when he attempts to justify his constancy, every thing he says, conspires to fix his attachment there, even the mystery of their connection.—His mistress, by

living

living at such a distance from London, is removed beyond the notice of his family; and she leaves him perfect master of his own liberty, from her dependence on his honour and his affection; he departs and returns at will, without her ever appearing to be dissatisfied or unhappy. This is to me one of her greatest charms; I abhor your puling querulous ladies; such turtles are apt to dull the ear with their plaintive notes, for, let men be ever so fond, they grow impatient at too jealous an inquiry into their fidelity.

You may now observe, my dear Beaumont, what a complicated intrigue I am engaged in. The gratification of my pique on one hand, and

of my pleasure on the other. Excuse the length of my letter, on account of the importance of the subject. A slight indisposition has confined me at home for these two days past, and I thought I could not employ my leisure better than in corresponding with you.—Let me know every thing you do; and pay me back your confidence for mine Your adventures cannot have the same consistency, because the course of your travels must render your abodes short and uncertain;—but no matter—a true Englishman shoots flying—I, who am fixed to a spot, have more leisure for art and method in my love-adventures.

LETTER IX.

Lord Clermont to the Marquis of Belvill.

YOU deceive yourself greatly, my Lord, in your conjectures; so far from being arrived at the settlement of preliminaries, as you affect to suppose, I frankly confess that I am totally discouraged from pursuing this affair

affair any further; not only from the difficulties opposed by Lady Warwick's conduct, but also from the secret feelings of my own heart.

I am not yet, I confess, inured to the mortifications of an unsuccessful passion, or to those pangs inseparable from perfidy and baseness.—I am, alas! but too sensible to the charms of the lovely enchantress; not a sentence escapes her that is not worthy of being recorded; her motion is accompanied with every grace to win the heart, and every glance she gives captivates the mind. Time, which moves slowly every where else, borrows wings in her society,—we no longer count the hours, but our regret at their departure.

But

But the more she allures my pursuit, the less can I think her an object fit to be sacrificed to a transient gust, or the caprice of a moment.

In an effusion of confidence, of which I am sensible of the value, you, dear Belvill, confessed to me that you yourself had tried in vain to gain her; judge then, my Lord, if I should attempt a fortress which you have found impregnable—if she has baffled your experience—can a novice, like me, expect success? It will certainly be more prudent in me to make an honourable retreat in time, than to wait to confirm my disgrace. Lady Warwick defends herself with too much skill to be proceeded against rashly. With me, she does

does not even practise that general coquetry which she allows herself with others;—to me, she is frequently peevish—sometimes even, I think, almost rude, and contradicts me upon most occasions. She seems to distinguish me as the marked victim of her caprice. I confess that, for some days, I felt somewhat for her, which I mistook for passion. Vanity, pique, and resentment, might perhaps have served, in place of love, to urge me on, if the voice of honour, nay, of simple honesty, had not recalled me to dearer ties, and restored my affections to an object whose attractions I feel the more strongly for every struggle I make to forsake her.

I confess

I confess the charms of Lady Warwick: her remembrance will always be pleasing to my mind, and perhaps not indifferent to my heart. But where is there a more charming woman than my Ismena?—I once introduced you to her, as the friend of my bosom, and you acknowledged her so; and yet, to you I will acknowledge that, though her charms are still in their meridian, I am now no longer sensible of that tumult of the senses, that fever of the pulse, that inconceivable emotion, which, pained by its excess, accompanied the first transports of my passion; but, more collected, I feel a peculiar tenderness, a generous emotion, a something not to be defined, that softens me into tears, whenever I find

myself ungrateful, or suspect the firmness of my constancy towards her. The flame of love may abate its fervour in the noblest heart, but cannot be extinguished but in the basest. How painful an effort to break the idol we have raised—to change the adorations of an heart once truely smitten, into cool civility—to despoil ourselves of all those charms and merits imputed to us by the grateful object whom we had once selected to render happy by the tenderest proofs of love!—To deprive them of the slightest mark of affection they have been accustomed to, is to deprive them of all.—I have now laid open my whole soul to your inspection. You are too well acquainted with the world, as well as with the human heart,

not

not to see, with a single glance, the difficulties of my situation. My extreme youth, the easiness of my disposition, my warmth of passion, an honest heart, the illusion of vanity, the restraint of principle, with a spirit above disguise, must raise a tumult in my mind, which, I fear, can only end in wretchedness. No, I will listen to the sentiments my own heart inspires; I will abide by them, and them alone; here will I fix. This is a measure attended by no conflicts in the resolve, or leaves remorse behind. I would prefer even the most cruel pains to those sad pleasures, which debase the heart, and leave nothing permanent behind but *repentance.*

You

You have often asked me what reasons I can have for so strong an attachment to my lovely recluse?—I can deny you nothing—accept then a secret never yet revealed. I do not *part* with it even now—I but *deposit*, or *divide it*.

The lovely Ismena de Elvira, is of a noble family in Spain, who has ever been distinguished by an inflexible adherence to government principles. Her father fell a victim to them, in the dreadful calamities into which that unfortunate country has been plunged. After receiving his last sigh, his lovely daughter vowed an everlasting hatred to the place of her nativity, and escaped from it; for, that soul, Belvill,

which

which seems only formed for love, was capable of that courageous energy that is ever stamped on great minds.

Her mother shared her sentiments; they gathered up the shattered remains of their ruined fortunes, which, though but slender, set them above soliciting support, or succour, from those self-named benefactors, who degrade while they oblige—those illiberal patrons who debase the coin of kindness, by the alloy of contempt, and perform their acts of kindness as if they were giving alms.

Acquiescing in the little they possessed, and rejecting every aid, Ismena, and her venerable parent, went

to

to the Madeiras;—I saw her there, when I visited that country, with my tutor, for the recovery of my health.—She was, at that period, young, lovely, and a widow:—I saw her, and, from that moment, first knew what it was to love.

What nice and delicate touches does nature make use of, to delineate the first impressions of a sensible heart!—Every object round me appeared to have been changed;—the days were brighter, and the nights more pleasing. There never was a woman, sure, more formed for realizing all the romantic visions of an enthusiastic imagination, or justifying the most extravagant fondness of a youthful heart.

You have seen her, my Lord;— I need not, therefore, bid you imagine to yourself the elegance of all the Graces, with the most striking charms that form a Venus:—a noble modesty, a natural delicacy, a spirited and interesting air, which so few women possess—an understanding sensible and penetrating, capable at once of all the refinements of taste; with all the depths of science.—Such is my Ismena!— such the charms that robbed me of myself.

My bashful looks wandered insensibly towards her; but, if by chance I met her eyes, my face was involuntarily covered with blushes.—She soon perceived the empire she had gained, and even,

even, perhaps, felt some sparks from the bright flame which she had kindled. She avoided my looks; but ever, on turning aside her eyes, or bending them upon the ground, they let drop an expression which betrayed her sentiment. There was an air of melancholy diffused over her features, that, like the shade in painting, gave an higher relief to her beauty—not of that severe or sullen kind, that awes or disgusts the beholder, and speaks aloud the coldness of the heart—it was that soft sorrow that dwells with tenderness, that is allied to love, that first produces and then feeds the flame.

Six months thus passed away in mutual embarrassments, resolves, constraints,

 struggles,

struggles, and torture;—when, not daring to reveal my passion to her, well knowing the Duke of Avondale would never consent to my uniting myself with a Catholic and a foreigner, however, at length, wearied out by con tending passions, I threw myself, in the presence of my idol, at the feet of her mother. I spoke with all that natural, unstudied eloquence, which truth inspires—I uttered not a sentence which I did not feel. At first she seemed offended:—my eyes were filled with tears—I pointed to the lovely object that inspired me, and she had no longer power to condemn my passion. Concluding myself half pardoned, I gave way to all the transports of that tumultuous joy which was natural to my

my youth, my hopes, the liveliness of my affections, and the presence of my beauteous Ismena:—witness of those emotions, which she partook in secret, and which were heightened by the restraint of modesty, she could not refrain from tears:—I was too attentive to her every motion, to let the precious drops escape me. I flew towards her; and, in the excess of my agitation, clasped her in my arms: and then, as if inspired by love and the moment, My Ismena!—my adorable Ismena! cried I—if your heart is free, and does not disdain to accept that of your devoted Clermont, I here swear, in the presence of your respectable mother—by honour and by heaven—that nothing shall ever make me break the en-

gagements which I here contract with you. I have not yet attained that happy age that makes us masters of ourselves; but love, sincere as mine, rises superior to the shackles of the law, or caprice of authority. My father may delay my happiness, but not prevent it;—I will preserve that faith inviolable to you, which he would wish me to plight elsewhere—it is in your heart that I deposit this vow, which if ever I violate, let misery attend my future days, or terminate them by sudden death!

The transport of an heart inflamed, the passion which sparkled from my eyes, the sincerity of my emotions, the candour of my expressions, and, above all,

all, the favourable sentiments of my Ismena, turned the indiscreet confession I had made to my advantage. She blushed, and sighed—pressed my hand gently, and received my vows:—her mother yielded her consent, and my love was sanctified by the presence of the Supreme Being, a sigh from beauty, and the consenting voice of nature. During the rapid interval of two months, every hour was marked by pleasure. Satisfied with constantly beholding the object of my soul's affection, I scarcely dared to wish for greater happiness, which appeared almost without allay.

But what situation is long exempt from pain?—The æra when mine com-

 menced,

menced, was at hand:—By the accounts which were conveyed to my father, of my returning health, he became anxious for my return home, and hastily recalled me. It was necessary that I should acquaint my Ismena of the letters I had received; it was also necessary that I should leave her:—but, to leave her at such a period, in a country so disturbed, and from which she had already suffered so much, was not in nature. By dint of prayers, and reiterated entreaties, I obtained a promise from her, that she would, in future, make England her home. Her mother consented to our joint request, but on condition that she might live at some little distance from London. I undertook to place them properly;

and

and we separated under the idea of meeting, in the space of a few weeks, in England; for no arguments I could make use of, would induce them to allow my accompanying them on their voyage.—My first care, I need not tell you, on my arrival, was to execute this precious commission; and I soon met with a beautiful cottage, near Richmond, and fitted it up with the greatest expedition; to defray the expences of which, they had given bills of exchange to do, it being impossible for me to prevail on them to allow me to be their banker. I delighted in embellishing the retreat which my Ismena was to adorn, with every thing which I thought could be agreeable to her; the garden was more particularly the

object of my attention; I enriched it with the choicest flowers:—could they be too precious?—her hand was to cultivate, or gather them.

When I was almost satisfied with what I had done, they arrived; and my lovely girl seemed to feel the sincerest joy at entering the rural abode her lover had selected for her.—Judge of my happiness!—I saw my charmer every day, without being subject to the eyes or questions of impertinence, or curiosity. The little veil that was spread over our attachment, seemed to enhance its value; and I at once enjoyed the pleasures of mystery, and the charms of liberty; I thought my happiness could know no end:

how

how cruel the event that undeceived me!

From the time of her father's death, the mother of my love had never enjoyed one day's perfect health; and the species of languor that consumed her, made us now apprehensive for her life. Her hour approached: a slow fever attacked her frame, enfeebled by misfortune, and, in less than a month's time, brought her to the brink of the grave. It was then that I beheld the soul of her angelic daughter;—every effort of filial piety, and heroic tenderness, were lavished in those painful moments; and when she had exhausted all her powers to soothe and comfort her now dying parent, she

yet lamented her inability of doing more. She watched by her bed-side the long night, nor could be persuaded, even by her entreaties, to think of rest. She would sometimes press her lips to the dim eyes of her expiring mother, and only withdraw them to give vent to a torrent of tears. What a scene!—On one side a spectre, scarcely animated—on the other, grace, youth, and beauty, struggling with death himself, and wrestling with him for his prey. How sincerely did I partake the indefatigable attention of my love; with what anxiety was my heart torn! Amidst these melancholy scenes, —buried in grief, and consequently impressed with the idea of death, how little did I regret the pleasures of dis-

sipation.

sipation. I only suffered when I was obliged to be absent, and could not think myself happy if I was not an equal sharer in the sorrows of so exemplary a daughter.

The fatal and much dreaded moment, which put an end to both our hopes, at length arrived. The almost beatified mother, collecting all her remaining strength, and retaining as it were, by force, her last breath, called us both to her, in the presence of her confessor:—we fell on our knees, at her bed-side:—" My Ismena!" said she to her daughter, who embraced her hands, " my beloved!—God separates us; but if your lover be possessed of honour and of virtue, he may repair to you my loss—he will not forget

forget his vows—he will remember the vow of a dying mother, that calls them to his mind—heaven was his witness!—I rest secure on his integrity—he will love you tenderly and constantly; you will be happy through him, when I shall be no more. O, my children! draw near, and let me unite you.—My death-bed is your hymeneal altar. My beloved child, my almost as dear Clermont, in the presence of this worthy friend," pointing to her director, "repeat your vows, and let him, as the vicegerent of God, sanctify them in his name." We did not hesitate to obey; and, at the same moment, she made an effort to embrace and bless my bride, her eyes closed for ever. The dreadful shrieks of my Is-

mena

mena still vibrate in my ear; in shrinking from the dead body of a fond mother, she sunk into the arms of a man who ought to be the declared protector of her future life. I was myself too much affected, to comfort her. Silent, helpless, and, I blush not to add, almost drowned in tears, I sustained my precious load, without having presence of mind to remove her, or myself, from this melancholy scene. At length, recovering her senses by degrees, she said, with the most heart-rending sigh, "O, my husband! you alone remain to me now, in this wide universe!"—Those words shall be for ever sacred to my heart—it is impossible that time, or aught on earth, can ever efface them; and, whenever I feel the dissipation of youth,

youth, or the distractions of the world, carry me beyond that purpose, I look back on my Ismena in that interesting moment, and recollect her mother's dying words, whose sounds still dwell upon my memory, alarm my mind, and sink my soul to such a state of tenderness as can never, I think, be shaken off.

Under these circumstances, my Lord, my connection with the most interesting of women has been formed. What man could forget a scene like that which consigned her to my protection?—And can I ever, think you, sacrifice a passion, founded on motives so sacred and respectable, to the slight gusts of transient desire?—If such a

man

man there be, I will not hesitate to pronounce him a monster:—and how much to be commiserated the unhappy victim, who must fall a sacrifice to his worthlessness, or caprice!

The strength of an attachment necessarily depends upon the circumstances which created it. As far as I can rely upon my slight experience, I apprehend that our sensibility is more increased by painful emotions than by the calm of happiness. The sensations arising from pleasure, leave but faint traces on the mind—while those that touch the heart, are deeply graved.—We love to recollect those sorrows, for which we are entitled to our own applause; and we are apt to reflect,

reflect, with a secret complacency, on those tender tears that are shed on their account. I have a thousand pardons, dear Belville, to ask; for though your philosophy may have armed you against what you call the weakness of sentiment, it is impossible you should read the recital I have given you, without being strongly affected. I by no means repent my confidence; and besides, (I confess the fact) I feel myself in some sort under a necessity of recollecting every event and circumstance that can strengthen my attachment to my Ismena: that world which I almost wish to fly from, and to which your patronage introduced me, an unexperienced boy—the artfulness of our coquets, and the vanity of endeavouring

deavouring to engage their affections—the variety of amusements in which I have shared—have not been able to effect a change in my heart, though they have, perhaps, disturbed my peace a little.

The desire of pleasing a thousand lovely women at once, has rendered me less attentive to the happiness of a single one, and insensibly disused me from the habit of loving. Formerly, the garden of my lovely recluse was an universe to me: while in its bowers, where I could talk to her of love, and hear her soft replies, I wished not for the empire of the world;—for some time past, I have

no

no longer felt that sweet oblivion, and charming prepossession, that sets at nought all that is foreign to its object;—even in her presence, I have surprised my thoughts, employed on other subjects—a thousand ideas have rushed into my mind, which I did not dare to analyse even to myself;—other forms besides hers, have glided into my heart; nor have I chased them thence. I continued still to be tender and faithful—but, alas! I felt no longer happy.

Such was the state of my heart when I first became acquainted with Lady Warwick. What I felt for her, doubtlessly was not love; but,

next

next to that, it was, of all other impressions, the most lively. I ventured to compare her with Ismena; and even to reflect upon the advantages which she might possibly possess above her. She had so far seduced my affections, that, for some days, I grew familiar with the idea of the crime, or the misery, of being inconstant. What have I said?—Shall I abandon the woman devoted to me? afflict that heart which has lodged its future tranquillity with me, and has no other confident, or stay?—Shall I betray my vows—those vows which were addressd by truth to innocence?

No, not all the enjoyments which

vanity

vanity can yield, could compensate for the pangs of rendering a being unhappy, whom we have loved—whom we still love.—Strengthen me in my resolution, instead of endeavouring to weaken it. I have now revealed to you both my secrets and my sentiments—I have unbosomed my whole heart.—My letter is long, but it contains the colour of my fate;—I hope you will, out of friendship for me, have patience to go through with it.

Adieu, my dear Lord—Lady Warwick is only beautiful;—my Spaniard is both handsome and sensible.—Hitherto the former has only interested my self-love; the other's claims are

graved

graved upon my heart. I should blush were I to balance between them for a moment.—Do not rally me too severely, I entreat; and forgive me for being constant.

LETTER X.

The Marquis of Belvill to Lord Clermont.

INDEED, my dear friend, you are a much greater master of the pathos than I could have imagined. Your letter is a perfect tragedy; and, though I am not much addicted either to romance or reflection, you have contrived

trived to affect me in such a way, that I must beg, if you should happen to have any more of these dramatic fables by you, you will be so good as to keep them to yourself, and spare my sensibility.

Your opinion of me is perfectly right. I am not exactly what I appear to be; for though I am very well disposed to make a jest of every thing, I could not find one word to laugh at in the long account you have given me of your intrigue with your Spanish maid; on the contrary, it has rather left a gloom upon my mind. I did not know, my dear Clermont, before, that the old lady mother had, with her dying breath, bestowed the *nuptial*

 benediction

benediction upon you. There is certainly nothing very lively in this business, but then it is extremely edifying, which is infinitely better, you know.

So then, my boy, it is all over with you, and you are absolutely fixed for life to your beautiful Spanish paragon? I foresee that you will make a shining figure in succeeding ages, through the fame of so distinguished a passion. I will believe that they have not imposed upon your inexperience, nor invented a pompous, melancholy tale, to catch hold of your youthful weakness and sympathy. I am a moral man myself, and have all the credulity of a child about me;—I shall, therefore, let the story pass as a matter of authentic

thentic record; nor will I examine how far this attachment may injure your future advancement in life, and render you the object of indelible contempt and ridicule.

But of what consequence are such considerations, when one is so much over-paid by the pleasures of the heart? —and what are the advantages of rank or fortune, to an inamorato, possessed, at a distance of ten miles from London, of a lovely stranger, who has neither friends or relations, and is contented to be buried in oblivion with you, in that new Eden, which your hands have planted and dedicated to Venus and Pomona?—There is really something very sweetly innocent in such

perfect devotion to love and pastoral life—the golden age revived.

How could I be such an ideot, to think of turning your affections on the lovely Warwick?—What comparison can there be, between her and your Amaryllis?—an inconsiderate woman, that all the world talks of—whose sentences are repeated for wit—well received at court—adored in public—and who is followed by all our young men of fashion, because she is in the full blaze of youth and *ton*, and even in possession of all the secret avenues that lead to preferment.

What an incumbrance must such a mistress be to such a Strephon? I, therefore,

therefore, do not press you to pay her your devotions. You must be buried alive with your pensive Spaniard;—neither see nor admire any thing but her—turn shepherd—lead an Arcadian life, and disperse all reflections that can be cast on you. Your father may, perhaps, murmur a little, but what does that signify?—you can retire into your garden—shut yourself up there, like Adam with his Eve—and thence, with pity and contempt, look down upon this world of wickedness and woe! The mother of the fair Ismena, from the grave, commands you to be faithful; and the manes of the old Don, her papa, would, no doubt, rise up against you, should you ever cease

to be so.—Adieu, Clermont!—Notwithstanding your solitary attachment, and the extreme awe with which your severity of morals must inspire me, I should yet be glad to meet you at the Opera to-night.

LETTER XI.

Lady Warwick to Mrs. Fitzroy.

HOW cruel is your husband, thus to confine you, my beloved Monimia, to a dull country life! I have called every day, for this month past, in Grosvenor-Square; your old porter has always the same reply to my en-

quiries—"Not yet come, my lady." I have a thousand things to say to my friend—I long to prattle with her. That love of gossipping, which the men reproach us with, has its source in the heart; mine is fatigued with the nothings one is obliged to say, and I can only make myself amends with you; and yet you are not to be seen, owing to the fancy of a cross old husband; but I am sure, very sure, that you share in my regret. Brought up together, and born almost with the same tastes and inclinations; attached by every circumstance that engages the affections of honest, youthful hearts—we promised to each other an unbounded confidence, and to become mutual sharers in each other's pains

and

and pleasures. Our first friendships are, in general, but trifling; ours was not so;—it has even surmounted those vanities which too frequently dissolve female connections; and the ties of childhood have been strengthened by the growth of reason—I forgave your being handsome, and you were kind enough not to wish me less so; in short, we have mutually given proofs of our generosity towards each other.

With all our seeming levity, my dear coz, we are worth a thousand of those pedants who pretend to be wiser. A dissipation of the *mind*, is often the safe-guard of the heart. From fearing too much the danger of sentiment,

we are apt, indeed, to run into the other extreme of coquetry; but whether of this Scylla and Charybdis, the rock or the whirlpool be the most fatal, let experimental philosophy determine.

We but resemble those timid birds, that fly ten times farther than they need, to get out of the sportsman's reach. We may easily have too much courage, but can hardly be reproached for too much caution. The history of our unfortunates, will soon resolve this question. Thus do I seem to be moralizing quite at my ease, and yet the subject I wish to confide in your breast, must *mark* my future fate;—in spite of myself, I wander from it, and

but

but delay my purpose.—I tremble at beginning. How falsely am I judged of!—how little am I truely known!

I was almost a child when married to Sir Charles; you were a witness of my fondness for him during the first year of our union. Spite of our modern modes, the follies natural to my extreme youth, and the vanity of making conquests—my tenderness was all devoted to that single object. In the space of two years, I became twice a mother; and these new attachments contributed to strengthen my former one, which would have lasted during life, had not my husband taken so much pains to destroy it:—it had been

kinder far to have deprived me of existence.

As long as it was possible, I endeavoured to deceive myself, with regard to his misconduct; and even condemned my own demerits for his inconstancy. The publicity and scandalousness of his amours, at length dispelled my error; and I found that I was sacrificed even to those vile wretches who sport with the health, honour, and fortune of their lovers. I was too timid to reproach him, except by silent tears; but continued to suffer in secret all those miseries which marriage can inflict on *virtuous* but ill-treated wives.

Beneath

Beneath the eyes of a respectable mother, who possesses at once the severest principles and the tenderest heart, I did for some time devote myself to the tender fruits of ill-requited love; I hoped that such conduct might recall my husband's affection:—vain hope!—the more he was imposed upon abroad, the more he disdained the thought of seeking happiness at home. He cannot bear to be so unfashionable as to enjoy the tranquil pleasures of domestic life. Unhappy Warwick!

Exclusive of this, I have not the least cause to complain of his behaviour towards me; he never had a frown upon his brow, nor any suspicion in his mind; always chearful and serene,

provided

provided I did not debase myself so so far as to question his conduct—he left me absolute mistress of my own. I did not abuse the liberty he gave me, but continued to live in retirement.

My mind, at length, insensibly grew languid, and my temper peevish; my lively, active soul became impatient of restraint, and my heart grew indignant at loving without hope of return.—Worn out with suffering, yet afraid of sinking into dissipation, finding only a frightful void around me, I sought abroad, for those illusions which do not compensate for the loss of real pleasure—I flew into that world which I had formerly fled.

Having

Having no pretensions to happiness, amusement became necessary to me, and I even wished for the admiration of those whose addresses I resolved never to accept. I read novels, to amuse my fancy; I listened to flattery, to divert my thoughts; and I have even called in coquetry to my aid, to triumph over my sensibility. I took care to restrain my conduct within the line of duty; but, at the same time, wished to enjoy all the privileges that my youth, figure, and rank were entitled to.—With such dispositions, I soon gathered a gay and numerous circle about me. Men are naturally attached to women who neither awe nor disgust them; and one is sure of preserving their attachment, while they grant them nothing.

This

This was all my art and practice; but women, being *generally* of a suspicious nature, imputed my behaviour to other motives. Though I grant that appearances were sometimes against me; the more I found I could rely on my virtue, the more freely I indulged myself in indiscretions; and it is these that undo us. The certainty of crime does not hurt us so much (with the world) as the appearance of one; and the world seems to have a double spite against a woman who prefers chastity to discretion!—I had a score of admirers; and they were all set down to my account as gallants. No person's conduct could be more calculated than mine, to exasperate and call forth that *piqued* kind of

abuse

abuse which flatters one, vexes another, and should be *avoided by all.*

I breathed incense as I passed along, on beds of flowers, and every object that I looked on wore an air of festivity. This enchantment owed its delirium to the perfect freedom of my heart. Why did I not preserve it?—Why cannot I recover it?—Alas! it has flown beyond my reach!—This is the burthen that weighs upon me—that I wish to reveal to you—that I yet fear to tell—and that, perhaps, you may already guess at.

Oh, my friend!—I weep upon your bosom—receive my tears as a confession. I love!—Yes, it is true!—but

I shall

I shall always have sufficient power over my heart to conceal its folly.—Why do I tremble thus?—and whence arises this inward presage, that tells me this passion will be attended with the most fatal consequences?—It will embitter my days; perhaps shorten them. No matter—the more I am alarmed, the more I deliver myself over to it; it is like a *panic*, when an unknown fear takes away the power of resistance.

I need not name to you the object of my idolatry; I think that all the world knows, or, at least, must guess at it. There is but him alone, amongst the crowd of our gay world, that is capable of attracting regard, or justifying,

fying, if possible, a woman's weakness. Heavens! did I say weakness?—fear it not, my friend; congratulate me rather on my fortitude, for it is equal to my love.

From the moment I beheld Lord Clermont—his name has escaped me—it is forever on my lips!—I felt that involuntary confusion that is ever the forerunner of strong passions;—my love increased daily; it is now arrived at its utmost height; yet it lies still concealed. The more warmth I feel in my heart, the more coolness I assume in my outward behaviour towards him. I fly about more than ever; I *rush madly* into the tumult of a world which I despise,

despise, and bring with me a wounded and a bursting heart.

Lord Clermont is the only object that I seek there; yet, when he appears, I affect not to see him, or at least not to take notice of him. I but seldom receive his visits at my own house; I had rather meet him by accident elsewhere, and choose rather to fly from him than await his coming. He thinks my conduct towards him ill-natured and unjust, while he alone employs my every thought and wish.

Such is my situation. He does not now, nor shall he ever know it. You are the single person in the world to whom

I dare

I dare reveal it. Judge of my present and my future sufferings:—To love in silence, and not even to know whether his heart is capable of returning my love!—To fear an hundred rivals, without having a right to complain of one? —to feel only the torment of love, and yet to acquiesce in such a situation!—to feed in secret on my tears, my anxieties, my jealousies!—to die gradually, by a slow-consuming fire, without attempting, or even wishing, to extinguish it!—Such is the resolution of that woman whom the world deems light and trifling, and has judged of so cruelly—whom nature has rendered susceptible of the deepest impressions beneath the appearance of the utmost levity!

The

The only ray of consolation that shed itself on my constrained and miserable state, is, that Lord Clermont has not hitherto betrayed a marked attention to any particular woman:—he does not seem even to shew a preference. I cannot express to you how much this idea has soothed my pains. Slight comfort, this. He certainly must love—but it is another object, and not me:—She enjoys that happiness which I forego, and may receive that adored lover into her arms, whom duty banishes from mine forever!

My gentle friend—sole partner of my sorrows!—I will sacrifice every thing to preserve my innocence: my honour shall remain unblemished, though

though my fame be not unspotted; and the heroism of virtue shall triumph over the single guilty passion that ever yet found entrance in my heart. I will acquaint you with the success of my efforts, and to you only will I speak of those painful struggles which my tenderness must cost me. Lord Clermont shall never know them, and I will affect a still greater air of levity and dissipation, for fear he should discover my susceptibility; and, if I can contrive to banish him entirely, I shall applaud myself for a conquest which I shall never cease to lament, and to which, perhaps, I may myself fall a victim.

You are going to exclaim against the

the extravagance of my projects; but extremes, in all cases, are made for me; they are my proper element.—Suffer me, then, to rave, and indulge myself with cherishing chimeras;—there may be a fund of reason hid be neath my folly, which only wants for a concurrence of events to be discovered. I cannot describe to you the various emotions of my mind. If I struggle against my inclinations with such vehemence, it is because the moment I should yield to them would be, for me, the epocha of every misery—perhaps still greater weakness. There is nothing I would not sacrifice to the lover on whom I had bestowed myself.

What

What a passion is love!—in what forms does it appear to my imagination!—It is there the little god is a divinity indeed—it is there his power reigns absolute and uncontrouled—that he rejoices in himself, and that his very essence is refined by delicacy. I write like one that is frantic; I know not what I say; yet I do not repent me of any thing I have written, as I am certain of increasing your esteem, by the free confession of my situation. Love, in that degree to which I feel it, does not degrade;—it elevates the heart—passion derives its virtue from its strength.

Do not attempt to advise me, for even your counsel would now be use-

 less

less to me. I will acquaint you with every thing, it is your privilege alone to read my inmost thoughts. Nor shall even the violence of my present delirium ever weaken the sincere and unalterable friendship that I owe you; and, if the presages of my mind be true, you will divide my last sighs with the object of my love.

CECILIA.

LETTER XII.

Lord Clermont to the Marquis of Belvill.

HOW very cruel you are! and how little do you enter into the distresses of my situation. Raillery, my Lord, degenerates into railing, when

addressed to those whose minds are not sufficiently at ease to pay it back in kind; it insults a wounded heart. Give me leave to tell you, that the style you have assumed is neither that of superiority nor of reason. One seeks for means, the other supplies them; you have done neither, and yet I never stood more in need of resources and consolation; from you I ought to expect them, I must affirm it.

You have drawn me into the snare, and there you leave me; and, from the brink of the precipice, you rally the unfortunate wretch whom you have plunged into it!—But for you, I should never, perhaps, have known Lady Warwick. Gently enchained by my first ties,

ties, I should have sought none other; it was you who painted this conquest to me, with such attractions as seduced my vanity, and have even, perhaps, reached my heart. You affect not to perceive my embarrassment; yet my whole letter betrays the conflicts of a man of honour, struggling with himself—mistaking his penitence for resolution—endeavouring to conceal his weakness from himself—dwelling on the motives that have rendered him culpable, and applauding himself for determining to sacrifice them to his scruples.

Yes, my Lord, I flattered myself that the account I gave you of the fascina-

ting stranger Heaven confided to my protection, would have interested you in her favour—have opened your heart to the claims of this amiable unfortunate; called you to her aid, and inclined you to become her guardian and defender. But, instead of interpreting my letter as I wished, you strive to fill my mind with the most injurious suspicions, which are a perfect outrage against innocence and candour. Never, my Lord, did falsehood approach the soul of Ismena; every thing I told you, was confirmed to me by the most incontrovertible evidence; but it is she alone to whom I will give credit—her heart is the sanctuary of truth.

How

How inexcusable the caprice of our sex; even while we do justice to the object of our attachment, and even feel the force of our ties, we have yet the rash courage to break them!—What, then, is this eternal void which the heart feels—this inquietude that nothing can lull to rest?—Charms of vanity, ye promise happiness—alas! how bitter are your performances!—With what regret are you not empoisoned!—I will prevent them:—I will accustom myself to look upon the charms of Lady Warwick with indifference, to become insensible to her disdain, and laugh at her affected negligence; in a word, I will combat this *penchant*, which, by the mere force of obstacles, the casualty of events, and the

the arts of coquetry, might possibly become soon a too serious passion.

With your sagacity, it is impossible your Lordship should not perceive that she has not the slightest partiality for me, and that she would soon laugh me to scorn, were I to attempt the declaration of a passion for her. I call at her door at least four times for once that I am admitted; and then, during a frozen conversation, which expires almost every instant, her eyes seem to wander about on any thing but me. If any other man comes into the room while I am there, her gaiety instantly revives, her looks become animated, and she appears as if she had got rid of a burthen. I fatigue her so much, that

that every person who arrives after me, appears, from her reception of them, to be welcomed as a comforter.

This is exactly the situation I stand in with the divine Warwick; and I congratulate myself upon it:—I shall be the more sensible of my Ismena's charms—of the real value of that open, affectionate, generous heart, that has never been dishonoured by artifice, or cunning. But perhaps I am unjust; perhaps the conduct of her Ladyship may be perfectly free from disguise;—I do not inspire her with any passion, and she knows not how to feign. I think her affected; but there are some in whom such appearances are natural.

This then is the secret of her constrained manners—her reserved discourse with me—and of that little petulance she sometimes betrays, without my having offended her. Luckily my liking for her is but a slight one, and may very easily be conquered.—The present small anxieties I suffer, may save me from a world of future pain; and, at this moment, I consider her cruelty but as kindness;—what might have become of me, if my whole soul had caught the infection, and an invincible attachment?—I cannot stop at this idea—what would have become of my Ismena, I say, whom I forced from her country—whom I dragged to this—who neither is or will be known to any human being but me—and who would

would look upon herself as criminal, if she dared even to suspect my conduct?

Her situation must, in that case, have been dreadful—mine ought to be still more so:—it is now over.—In spite of the severity of your irony, the cruelty of your misrepresentations, and the powers of your rhetoric, I applaud myself for the entire restoration of affections I have made to that object whom I could never have forsaken, without being guilty of the most vile ingratitude.

Forgive, my Lord, the warmth of my expressions, in attributing them to a heart quickly moved at every attempt

to degrade the object of its affections. Ill befall that wretch, who does not himself feel an affront offered to any being under his protection!

I have the honour to be, &c. &c.

CLERMONT.

LETTER XIII.

Sir Frederick Neville to Lord Clermont.

I WAS grieved, my dear Clermont, at being from home when you called on me; I was engaged in returning some dull visits, which lay on my hands, to some persons a short distance from town. On my return, I found

found your letter, which interested me extremely; you are then what I wish, and what you ought to be. You are restored to yourself, to your genuine principles, from which you could only be estranged by some violent or extraordinary emotion. I lamented your hesitating between two motives, which were so little capable of balancing each other. I am neither acquainted with Lady Warwick, nor your interesting Spaniard; but I shall ever be an advocate for her who has given you her heart, and has, of course, an indisputable right to yours. I know that there are those who make no scruple of seducing women without loving them; who are lavish of their adorations while they resist, and of their insolence when they yield; who flatter,

merely

merely to debase. Such cruelty is foreign to your nature, nor shall I ever suspect you of it. That sex which we so ungenerously oppress, merits our regard even in proportion to its weakness.

Behold, my dear friend, the contagious power of example. Without thinking like that worthless crew I have been endeavouring to describe, you were upon the very point of acting like them. The wretches pretend to happiness, and yet set out with poisoning its source. Let them try to esteem women; they will then see whether they are not estimable. Have they a right to despise the morals they inspire, or to resent what they advise?—When our mistresses deceive

us,

us, and debase themselves, the disgrace should be all our own; they but peep a little into the future, and their inconstancy arises from a presentiment of our perfidy.

I have always detested those self-named *successful gallants*; the sight of them, in spite of me, raises an idea in my mind of twenty unfortunates.—Under an outward appearance of gentleness, politeness, and humanity, these beings hide a savage soul. They resemble conquerors; like them, they feed upon the sighs and tears of those they have subdued; and like them, too, they would slaughter all before them, if they were not, in general, even more cowardly than vicious. Their

souls

souls are frozen, their understandings barren and uncultivated; and if it were not for the little emotions arising from their intrigues, they would be nothing more than walking automatons, overwhelmed with ridicule, lassitude, and contempt.

Perhaps, dear Clermont, you may think that I have coloured this portrait too highly; but a little exaggeration is allowable, when one has a material point in view.

When the rock is strongly marked, we shall not run and dash ourselves against it; but if concealed beneath a smooth and gently gliding stream, our

treasure

treasure may be shipwrecked unawares.

You will find me a strict moralist, for my years; my youth might perhaps, with others, lessen the credit of my counsel; but your good sense prevents my apprehending this objection from you. A Mentor of five-and-twenty, who has been well educated, may, in my opinion, be full as good a preceptor, as a pedagogue of threescore. That reason which seems only supported upon an old ruin, frequently disgusts; and the quick feelings of right and wrong have infinitely more force than the slow documents of experience. Besides, when old folks begin to preach, we always suspect their doctrines

doctrines to be a little infected with the mortification of being deprived of those pleasures they condemn. They forbid what they cannot enjoy; and from thence we conclude their severity insincere:—but instruction acquires new strength, when it comes from a mind susceptible of every pleasure, and a heart assailed by every passion; no suspicion of apathy can then weaken its influence, and we must either believe the virtue of our friend, or distrust our own.

I could never yet conceive why persons of our age are denied the privilege of giving advice, or instruction even, if necessary. In the prime of

life,

life, if men have not a logical sense of virtue from reason, they have, at least, a sentiment of it from instinct; the traces of innocence are deeper impressed on their minds; they have yet but little acquaintance with mankind, nor are their sharp feelings blunted by collision with the world; their thoughts are not intent on mean calculations, which dry up the sources of liberality; not being confined themselves, they seek abroad for other objects to rest upon; and they love with ardour, being credulous of the same return of affections. The empoisoned fruits of experience, ripened by age, do not mingle their bitterness with the sweetness and purity of our first impressions. Years teach men

wisdom,

wisdom, but youth is the season of virtue. You fully prove the truth of this aphorism.

Excuse this digression; it flowed almost involuntary from my pen; and I never regret the inspiration of sentiment.—Yes, my friend, we are, at all times of our lives, possessed of an invariable rule to act by; it is this that has recalled you to your first ties, and prompts me to confirm you in keeping them unbroken. Were we to act otherwise, we should be both of us unjust. She who has with virtue sacrificed most to you, should certainly be the most dear to you, whose heart has been fully proved by time; and her charms being also unimpaired, her happiness ought

ought to be so too. When passion is founded on esteem, the edifice can never subside while its base subsists; and that kind of apathy which you have lately experienced towards your Ismena, is rather your fault than hers, arising more from want of vigour in your mind, than want of merit in her.

How interesting does she appear to me!—To judge of her affections, you must recall the confidence she expressed in you, when you were upon the point of betraying her;—it was from yourself I learnt it. She rested securely in the refuge of those arms which were almost open to receive another possessor. You are her universe. She is superior to suspicion, and fondly thinks,

while

while under your protection, she can have nought to fear.

Oh, my Lord, repay *her* love, her esteem, by yours; let us never be inhumane to that weak sex who are anxious for happiness, and seem to be so well formed to enjoy it. To rob a woman of the enchantment of unsuspecting passion, would be to plunge a poniard into the bosom of a child, while it was innocently amused by a fairy dream.

I do not injure Lady Warwick by defending her rival; she has only attracted your gratitude; you became acquainted with her by chance; you visited her, you thought her handsome;

some; your head grew giddy; her vanity was flattered by the triumph, though she valued not the prize; the conquest was all she pretended to; her ambition is gratified in this, and can therefore have no failure of obligations to reproach you with. The only sentence in your letter that I dislike, is that where you speak of her. You are inexhaustible in her eulogy; and, for fear I should not see her with your eyes, you have repeated the draught of her portrait above twenty times. I am seldom guided by public opinion, but you must know that it is not very favourable to Lady Warwick. They say she is giddy, vain, dissipated, fond of exhibiting herself, and so desirous

of

of adoration, that she purchases votaries, sometimes, at the expence of her prudence.

I know nothing of the matter myself, and what I have heard may possibly proceed from the voice of calumny; but if you were even otherwise disengaged, and resolved to dedicate your devotions solely to her, these are not the only faults I should oppose against the formation of an attachment the laws both of God and man would loudly reprobate; and I flatter myself I should be able to arm my friendship with such invincible objections as would enable you to combat your passion for her.

If Lady Warwick does not take care, her

her reign, believe me, will not last long; her beauty will decay, and her failings, supposing she has any, will then appear without a veil to cover them; her sensibility alone will remain for her punishment. These sort of women are like flashes of lightning; the blaze they make is too bright to last, and, when it ceases to dazzle, leaves no trace behind. I know not where to finish; I imitate you. Lady Warwick has certainly some secret spell, that leads one on to talk of her.

I thank you for your obliging offers, of exerting the influence of the Duke of Westbury in my favour. Attend to your own happiness, and that will increase mine. You have known me

 since

since my first entrance into the army, and I do not think, during our friendship, you have discovered in me the smallest impatience for preferment. I divide myself between the duties of my profession, and those I owe to my worthy uncle, the old General, who has been, from my earliest infancy, a parent to me; he lives on his own estates, covered with wounds, superior to titles, neglected by the court, but respected and beloved by all his connections. I have been brought up in his principles. Till my actions speak for me, I will not accept of any rank that might call their merit in question. I prefer the hardy labour of a gallant soldier, to the idle activity of the effeminate courtier; the one stands in need of

 titles,

MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASW...

titles, to cover his insignificancy; the other only seeks for glory, and waits for proper occasions to acquire it.

Adieu, Clermont!—Once more I wish you to think rightly of yourself, talk less of Lady Warwick, continue faithful to the being who has devoted her life to you, and act ever towards her in such a manner as to prevent my ever having an opportunity to stand forth her advocate again.

LETTER XIV.

The Marquis of Belvill to Lord Clermont.

I SHOULD not have offended you, dear Clermont, had I guessed to what a degree you are interested for your fair incognita. Nothing less than the warmth of your apology for her

her could have opened my eyes; and I now sincerely ask your pardon for the indiscreet sally I ventured to make against her, and I hope you will accept of this reparation.

You will see, by the contents of this letter, that I am not so much wedded to my own opinion as you imagine. With the same earnestness which I formerly pressed you to pursue the conquest of the divine Warwick, I now entreat you to decline it. The clear-sighted are sometimes deceived. Neither the cunning acquired from experience, nor a perfect knowledge of the world, are able to withstand the unluckiness of circumstances. I fancied that I had discovered, in this

Circe,

Circe, a slight inclination in your favour; and this was all we wanted. We should not have asked for more, as that would have carried her just as far as we wished. But it would be wrong to flatter yourself with that hope now; after this, who can define the sex?—I shall relate the fact.

At a supper, the other night, after the opera given by Lady S—, the conversation turned upon our present young men of fashion. You were, of course, mentioned. Some of the fair-ones present, and particularly the lady of the house, who is allowed to be a good judge, maintained that you possessed every talent that was requisite to please. Lady Warwick contradicted, most ve-

hemently, the general assertion, and opposed a negative to every article of it, that was afterwards urged in your favour. She criticized your character, your figure—even your countenance, with the utmost severity; and, when Lady S—— modestly insinuated that she believed you were master of art and address at least, your cruel antagonist burst into such a fit of laughter, as disconcerted the whole company. In short, it was not her fault that you were not stripped of every grace and accomplishment you might ever have pretended to. She began the scrutiny with disdain, and ended with bitterness. She seems to have conceived some marked antipathy against you. Such are the sex. It often happens

that the most amiable men become the objects of their aversion.

I thought it incumbent on me to acquaint you with the scene in which you were so much interested, and, I may add, exposed. All that remains for you now, is to resolve to forget the fascinating Warwick—never to see her more, and to punish her by a total absence and neglect, for her contemptuous treatment of you. It is true that she is as beautiful as it is possible for woman to be, and universally adored by one sex, and envied by the other; —but what is that to you?—Will it compensate for her having accused a young man of your rank, of faults, or

 defaults,

defaults, which were never imputed to him before?

Adieu, dear Clermont!—Notwithstanding the harsh contents of your last, I am not less than before,

Your's sincerely,

BELVILLE.

LETTER XV.

Lord Clermont to Sir Frederick Neville.

WHERE could you be, my dear friend, when I called upon you this morning?—Monstrous! What an early stirrer you are, to be out before twelve!—I wanted, of all things,

to meet you. You would have seen me in a glorious passion. I defy you to guess the occasion of it:—Lady Warwick.—You know what I think, and what I have said of her. You know the warmth with which I always speak of her, even in the instant when I swear to forget her. Well, she has become my greatest enemy—she has declared against me, with an unexampled violence.—It is not enough, it seems, that I have been the sport of her coquetry; I am now become the object of her contempt and derision. She hates me—but why, I know not. What have I done, except praising and admiring her charms, and giving myself up, for her, to those distractions which you have so frequently

seen

seen and condemned? She hates me, when, perhaps——This is not a vague conjecture, it is a fact, my friend.

In a large circle at Lady S——'s, the other night, she inveighed against me; denied every thing that was said in my favour, and seemed even to be carried out of herself, by the vehemence of her aversion towards me. I should not have given credit to this account, which, I own, appears a little exaggerated, if it was not confirmed by the recollection of her frozen air—her constrained conversation—and that peculiar species of reserve, which she seems to have only with me. I am strongly tempted to discover the cause of

of this caprice, and to arm myself with all the arts of address which can be opposed to the insolence of coquetry.

No, it is better to command my resentment, and govern myself with moderation. I acknowledge myself to have been highly provoked by Lady Warwick's conduct; but reflection has calmed my rage. Behold me now, perfectly tranquil; and, I hope, quite cured of my former weakness. It was absolutely necessary that she herself should remove the bandage from my eyes; without her aid, I had still, perhaps, continued blind. If this little event had not happened, I know not whether the interest she had in my heart

heart might not have embittered the very source of my happiness.

That interest is now destroyed; I shall henceforward hear her name pronounced without emotion. Ismena, the gentle, affectionate Ismena, shall reign unrivalled in my heart; no other image shall enter there, and mix itself with her's. I shall no longer wake with the painful anxiety of hesitating between two impressions, nor feel remorse for robbing her of my thoughts who alone deserves them all.—Let Lady Warwick triumph in her scorn; her hatred shall have its free course. I am content to be a silent victim, and will sacrifice even my just resentment to her. Do you think, my dear fel-

low,

low, that it would be a great crime to convince her that I am not so stupid or deficient of address as she imagines? —to bring her, by degrees, to the necessity of denying her opinion, and to venture the appearance of a little infidelity, for the present, merely to give a greater *éclat* to my future constancy? — Should I become false to Ismena by punishing her rival, and convincing her that one may be faithful to her, without becoming totally insensible to the charms of another?— I am pleased with this combination of ideas; I think it innocent:—what say you?—Lay aside the severity of your principles, and consider only how I am situated.

My

My head is almost turned; I am agitated by a thousand different thoughts, and know not which to fix on. I am only clear in one point, which is, that I can no longer love Lady Warwick. I should be much surprised if it were possible to prove the contrary. What do I say?—I never loved her—I deceived myself, but my illusions are now all banished.

Adieu!—I know not what I say; I contradict myself. Come, or write to me. I cannot account for the conduct of this woman—it is certainly extraordinary. Alas! what will mine be?

LETTER XVI.

Sir Frederick Neville to Lord Clermont.

WHAT are you thinking of? Is it possible that the chit-chat of a *trifling* woman, or at least one that is considered *in that light*, can disturb your mind, excite your resentment, or pique

pique your sensibility?—Besides, are you sure that she did hold such a conversation, and that it has not been misrepresented in the repetition?—Why are you not superior, my friend, to these little mortifications?—Women are entitled to a freedom of speech, and are at liberty to say whatever they please; it is *our* fault if we rate their opinion too highly.

From your letter, I might be led to think that you adore the fair enchantress; but I rather choose to attribute your agitation to the offence which has been offered to your self-love, than to the emotion of a wounded heart. You have had a design on her, which

which has not succeeded; at our time of life we are apt to feel these small regrets too sensibly; our passion increases with our pique, and our resentment raises an additional trophy to the woman who has rejected our love.

Take care, Clermont!—One is often caught in the snare he spreads for others. You ask me, if it would be a crime to counterfeit a passion, in order to acquire rights which might enable you to make your own conditions?—Yes, my dear friend, it would, most certainly, be highly criminal; particularly so in you, whose delicacy would blush at obtaining a

success

success by fraud which is due to love alone. Ask your own heart this question, and be determined by its answer. I discover the Marquis in this project; I do not find you there. Believe me, those who feign what they do not feel, do not revenge, but punish themselves.

Wherefore should a man that is happy, as you are, or ought to be, give himself up to such disingenuous, such culpable intrigues, that both fatigue and disgrace the heart, that strip it of all refinement, of that interior charm, without which, possession can never rise to enjoyment? — Indulge your heart in those delights that love has

so

so liberally bestowed upon you, and do not languish after those that are denied. Be careful how you expose yourself in this affair;—see Lady Warwick but seldom, and neither betray resentment or regret; behave in such a way as to make her blush at herself, for the preference she has given to others. This is the only triumph that is worthy of yourself.

I do not fear tiring you, because I truely know your character. Attached to honour and virtue, if the easiness of your temper draw you aside, let their ideas be presented to you, and on the instant you embrace their laws. I consider it as my province to hold them

them up to your view. How pleasing is the task to friendship, sincere as that which glows for you, in the breast of

F. NEVILLE.

LETTER XVII.

Lord Clermont to Sir F. Neville.

I CANNOT comprehend this woman:—she almost sets me mad;—her conduct is totally unaccountable; and my best way would be entirely to forget her.—Yes, that would certainly be right, but I cannot help talking of her

her to you, once more, for the last time. I must acquaint you with the almost incredible reception she gave me yesterday.

According to your advice, I stifled my resentment; my brow was serene, my heart still more so.—In this tranquil condition I went to wait on her, firmly resolved not to let her perceive that I had the smallest reason to be dissatisfied with her. I was told she was dressing, but that her mother was just arrived from the country, and was in the drawing-room.—I was shewn up, and found Mrs. Delmond alone, working. This lady has all the manners of the *vieille cour*, with the

unaffected politeness and ease of the present day, united to a frankness and wit which one seldom meets united; but she has also a face that I could not help thinking extremely dismal, in spite of my respect for her. She asked me many questions—seemed pleased with my answers—and, to shew her kindness, began to preach to me. Every thing she said was perfectly sensible, and well expressed; but, notwithstanding all her eloquence, there never was a sermon more impatiently listened to. I expected a pretty woman; and she did not come. At length, after waiting an eternal hour, Lady Warwick arrived, lovely as Venus' self, and dressed with all the

charms

charms of the most refined taste. She made me some confused excuses, seemed embarrassed, addressed a few incoherent words to me, and rose up the moment after:—said it was horrible to have kept me waiting so long, and shocking to be obliged so soon to leave me; but that she hoped her mother would have the goodness to do the honour of her house in her stead.— She then politely, but coldly, bade me adieu, and vanished.

Say, my friend, could you be easy in my situation?—I never saw her look so beautiful; her image has not left my thoughts one moment since. I would forget her—I have resolved to

do so—but how is it possible I should? I think it would be better to revenge myself, and strive to please her, cost what it may. To leave me with her mother, and not make me amends by even a few minutes conversation!—She said she was going to a breakfast at Blackheath. I had also a card from Mrs. Charemont;—I flew there after her. She did not appear. I waited till past five o'clock, and being obliged to attend the House of Commons, by the particular request of my father, on that day, if she did go, I missed her. You see that her conduct is decisive. Can you still think that she can ever be made to blush at seeing me, unless it be with anger?—She

abhors

abhors me:—and why?—let me once more declare I know not—but I will know.

You will think me extravagant:—I am so, I avow it. Luckily this folly is not dangerous. I own that I am piqued; but it is clear that I am not in love; I should be miserable if I thought I was; and it is from fear of falling into that weakness, that I am resolved to pursue my project, and to play the knave in my turn. Timid consciences never succeed with women. There, for instance, is the Marquis—he deceives them all, and they believe him still. *A propos*, what have you done to offend him?—or how happens it

that ye are not well together?—Not that he has said any thing to me upon this subject, but that I am not satisfied with his manner when you are mentioned.

If you can, call on me to-morrow, at Westbrook House, before two o'clock; I will wait at home for you: if not, write to me—but spare your advice—it will be useless now; I am determined to indulge my fancy. This small trespass will save me from a greater. It is necessary that I should become a little faulty, to prevent my being wholly so. What an unaccountable being is Lady Warwick!

LETTER XVIII.

Sir Frederick Neville to Lord Clermont.

YOU desire me to spare my advice:—but indeed, my dear friend, you never stood more in need of it than at this moment. How easily is your *head* inflamed!—for, not to de-

ceive you, that alone is affected; and yet your *heart* must suffer all the pain. You are determined to seduce, deceive, and corrupt your own pleasure, beforehand, by laying their foundation in falsehood. When one sports with the miseries of two beings at once, they run the risk of rendering themselves unhappy also, and deserve to be so. On certain occasions, men think they are only trifling, when they are playing the barbarian; circumstances draw them on, affections are transferred, and a moment's pleasure is frequently purchased at the expence of a life of regret.

And what is the pleasure, what the enjoyment, to see the lovely eyes of your

your tender Ismena (she who ought to be acknowledged as the partner of your heart) for ever quenched in tears? The tender, faithful woman, who possessing at once the tenderest of hearts, and the utmost purity of mind, gave up to your entreaties all which, from the early period of her life, she had been *accustomed* to love!—who stands alone in the great universe, without relations, friends, or even support;—to hear her sighs and just complaints break through the silence of her retreat, unanswered by any thing but the echo of her troubles;—hear her deplore the fatal hour in which she knew you first;—and even still more, lament the moment in which her weakness sealed a confidence in your honour,

and the broken vows you just have made her—a prey to bitter reflection, without one consolation:—think but a moment on this subject, and be happy if you can; or bless the friendly hand that has so timely presented the image to your view. Horrid as the idea is, avert it not; let it penetrate your very soul; it is a blaze that will warm, while it enlightens it.

I will not, dare not, would not think that you love Lady Warwick; your pride alone makes you desire the conquest; and to that insignificant motive, you would sacrifice every thing. Where is the glory of subduing a wife, a mother, and a coquet; or the pleasure of forming those artful wiles, where

success

success must cover you both with remorse and shame?—If this Circe, who has thus enchanted your senses, is only what she appears, she is not worth the cost of perfidy; but if we are deceived, which may very possibly be the case, and that her outward form conceals an honest and a noble heart, how would you be embarrassed, to have robbed a husband of his wife, and, above all, innocent children of the tender cares a mother *only* can bestow! How severe would be your repentance—how dreadful your reflections!

The human heart is not capable of two equal attachments; which of them would you sacrifice?—They must both

be dear to you, but one of them must have the preference; and the other will always have sufficient force to wound the heart where it no longer reigns. All those dear illusions which constitute the delights of love, must vanish there; when the heart is no longer pure, its enjoyments cease to be so; bitterness mingles with our sweetest pleasures; regret for the past, casts a gloom over the present; and, even in the chosen object, reflection will stir up compunction in the mind for the one forsaken.

These crimes, my dear Clermont, are yet, I trust, far distant from you; it is in your power to prevent their nearer approach. Let not my friend-

ship

ship appear burthensome to you; it may yet be useful, and it is far from being severe; it has no right to be so; for, in the very moment that it opposes those indiscretions which may be fatal to your peace, it is ready to weep over that weakness from whence they spring. My reasoning proceeds entirely from my heart; it ought not, therefore, to offend yours. Learn to fear those, my Lord, who talk another language to you—who assume an air of superiority in philosophy and the knowledge of the world, and use a kind of fashionable jargon, merely to deceive and lead those minds astray which are already bewildered—who ridicule the most respectable obligations, and insensibly destroy, even in the most

most virtuous hearts, the natural and precious feelings of instinct.

I should pity you, if you could hesitate for a moment, with regard to the original, for whom this portrait is designed.—It is necessary that we should know our enemies:—you ask me if I have done any thing to offend the Marquis of Belville?—Yes, I have seen through him;—beneath all the vain decorations and formal pomposity and elegance of a court, my eye has penetrated the man.—O my dear friend, ill betide those who are *detected* by being *discovered!* The Marquis is one of those. The moment I found him out, my features of themselves acquired an expression of disdain. It is a sure, but

but secret weapon which wounds him, and avenges me. His pompous demeanour imposes not on me—it is but the mark of his insufficiency.

The first time I happened to be in his company, he affronted me, with that insolent kind of politeness which, while it affects the air of condescension, seems to mark a superiority on the one side, and a subordination on the other. But I received his address so coldly, as to deprive him of the advantage he wished to take; and soon reduced his Lordship to that level which he had endeavoured so haughtily to destroy. The more I feel myself inclined to pay proper regards to others, the less can I bear to have them exacted

exacted from me; and he is one of those that seem to demand them. His pretensions to respect are so very slight, that he is the more greedy of deference, and I am not apt to be very prodigal of my complaisance.

Follow my example, my Lord; distrust the man who would debase himself for ever, to obtain a momentary gratification; who dishonours a great name, by the obscurity of his little intrigues, and thinks himself of importance, because he is spoken of for his amours with women of fashion, whose vanity attaches them more to him than their inclinations;—but let him continue the object of their rivalry, and a party in their libertinism—let

him

him be accepted without love, and quitted without regret—and let him be the leader of the fashions, who ought to be a pattern of the virtues.

What service has he done the state? what for his country?—Has he been a good husband, father, or common wealth man?—does he know the sweets of a disinterested friendship?—He is a stranger to all these tender ties; his inquietude and weariness force him into society, in search of dissipation; he flies from solitude, because he fears to look into himself.—Forgive the severity of my pencil, it is guided by the hand of friendship. I foresee, with grief, that your too partial opinion of this person may warp your principles, injure

injure your character, and destroy your peace.

Do you, my Lord, recollect the contents of a letter you wrote to me about a month ago?—In that, you spoke your natural sentiments. How much is your style altered!—It is impossible your heart should be so changed; and it is to that alone that I address myself;—turn it towards nobler objects, and you can never think a triumph over a frail woman, a conquest worth your boast.

You have one amiable woman, honourable, virtuously attached to you—one that the fear only of a parent's anger induces you to hide in obscurity.

You acknowledge that, to the possession of every good quality, she adds every charm, and yet say you are not happy!—If there be still something wanting to your sensibility, awaken it by noble deeds; strengthen your love by that heroism of which it ought to be both the source and the reward.—Do not limit the scene of your actions to the small circle of St. James's; devote yourself to your country, and suffer it to presage what you may one day be. Distinguish yourself from those wretched beings who crowd Bond-Street—those decrepid and decaying youths who present you with the ruins of their early ripeness, and cheat the promised hopes of their country.

Let

Let us unite, my friend, in doing good. The flame of enthusiasm is almost extinguished. Glory is no longer an object of ambition. Let us enter into a vow to be solely guided by her inspiration to oppose the corruption of the age, retrieve the character of manhood, and rejoice all virtuous hearts with the sight and the success of our generous emulation. Of what prodigies are our minds capable, when roused to ardour by objects worthy of great souls!—Their strength is doubled, in each, by their union; should either of them feel a weakness, the spirit of the other would triumph over it, or, at worst, enable him to conceal it in his own bosom.

Adieu!

Adieu!—You will see, by the date of this, I am at Brighton; and here I mean to remain a few days. The moment I return to town, I will set out in search of your Lordship. May I find my friend happy, is the first wish of

His devoted

F. NEVILLE.

Brighton.

LETTER XIX.

The Marquis of Belvill to Lord Clermont.

I WAS in so great a hurry to attend the King's levee in time, yesterday, when you called on me, that I had not sufficient leisure to weigh and consider properly every article of your confidence;

confidence; but I have reflected on what you told me since, and zeal grows stronger when assisted by meditation. And so, my dear Lord, you are piqued at last; you have some spirit still left, I find, and I congratulate you; therefore———I shall not enquire whether you love Lady Warwick, or no; that point is by no means essential to our purpose; your business is to gain her, and to make the intrigue as pleasant to yourself as possible, and afterwards to let her float away on the same tide that brought her.—Is not this what we agreed upon?

You must begin by conceiving such an idea of her Ladyship as you should have;

have; you should avoid betraying the least manner of esteem for her; she would soon perceive it, and, perhaps, (women are strange beings) she might take it into her head to justify your opinion. Pride and frailty would then be at strife; she would keep you in employ whole years, without coming to a surrender; and, ever temporising, would not yield at last, without the doleful grimace of an affected modesty; for all which, you would have yourself only to reproach.

Take one general rule. If you ever had an high opinion of a woman, which very rarely happens, it should be concealed from her with the greatest caution. If she finds that you have

but

but a slight idea of her strength, she is then at her ease—she sets no price upon the event; nor does she think herself piqued to a vigorous defence, when the decisive moment approaches, which her own conduct has insensibly led to. This is her calculation:—By yielding, I shall lose nothing, and I shall gain time; for the sooner this matter is brought to a conclusion, the sooner I shall be at liberty to change.

You must by no means, my Lord, multiply your assiduities; they know nothing of women, who fancy they are to be attached by a languid, uniform submission, or the insipid flattery of verses in praise of their charms. These sort of things but weary them;—it is

 contra-

contradiction that awakens, that surprises, and gives them a taste of their own consequence, in their resentments. They always make account of the man who has power to animate their looks with the fire of impatience, to sharpen their wits by dispute, and who provokes them on purpose, merely to be remembered by them. But I anticipate:—let us proceed methodically.—The first step is to conquer your timidity. A strong confidence is a warrant of success. I thought with you, at first, that the regard of the fair Warwick for you, had not arisen to a certain point; but, after a closer examination, the matter appears to me in this light:—What seemed to us indifference, nay, even dislike, is nothing

thing more than a concealed passion; a sort of smothered flame, which, upon a little stirring, would soon crackle and blaze forth.

I have met her several times since you have neglected her, and her mind seems totally engaged. I have even surprised her, lost in a reverie, which is by no means natural to her; and, at her age, what can the subject of her musings be?—Her eyes, that before could express no other sentiment but spirit, have acquired a certain softness in them, and seem frequently fixed upon the ground:—thou art assuredly the occasion of this metamorphosis.—In short, why should she fly you?—or why appear reserved and confused

 when

when you are present?—She speaks ill, only because she thinks too well of you.

I recollect an objection you made me, that had really something specious in it. If she is so light, so easy of access, so conversant in intrigue, say you, wherefore does she behave to me with so much reserve, prudence, and severity? The case is clear—she exerts her address, in proportion to her attachment. You, my Lord, are of high rank, very young, in great request, and may be carried off from her in a moment; it is therefore necessary to attach you by the arts of coquetry. You think, perhaps, this to be her first adventure. How I laugh at such simplicity!

plicity!—Child as you are!—Sleep in peace, and do not let the notion of her virtue disturb your slumbering. She will not suffer you to languish long in the expectation of happiness, or in that satiety which usually attends fruition.

Furthermore I will tell you, for your comfort, that she has not rejected, but postponed my suit. This was a whim agreed upon between us; but there are ten at least, ready to depose in her favour, against your Lordship's ridiculous fears. Let her alone, and, by the time you are come to a conclusion, she will herself aspire to the pleasures of breaking off with you.

Lady Warwick, believe me, is a complete woman of the world. She will receive your vows, without wishing to fatigue you with keeping them. It is only necessary that your attachment to her should be known and talked of; and when this is effected, she will pursue her own way, and leave you at liberty to follow yours. You will inscribe her name on your list, and your successors will apply to you for instruction. You will tell them all you know, and you will then have acquitted yourself with the utmost propriety and kindness towards her.

Since you are absolutely determined not to give up your pretty Donna, you may then return back to her. I

have

have lectured you a little upon this subject, but I begin to be so seriously affected with what you have told me about her, that you may be certain my heart is really touched, by my approving of such an unexampled constancy. Well then, since fate will have it so, you shall once more return to her, and the little remorse arising from this *transient lapse* of faith, will awaken the feelings of your heart, and render it but the more sensible to all the moral charms of fidelity. The only difficulty we have to apprehend in this business, is that of deceiving your fair recluse completely, and, by that means, saving you from the irksomeness of reproaches, the embarrassment of tears, and all the tender expostulations which distract

distract the mind, and are, to the last degree, distressing to certain natures. I have thought of an expedient; it will be a penance on myself, but I am ready to become the sacrifice. Friendship should know no bounds. You need only, my dear Clermont, introduce me, as your friend, to have the *entrée* of Rose-Hill Cottage at pleasure, and I will be answerable for the event. I shall postpone my own pursuits, to devote myself entirely to yours. The desire of obliging and serving you will furnish me with new resources every day, to prevent your Ismena from having the least suspicion; I will amuse her mind, strengthen her confidence, and preserve her tranquillity, during the continuance of your

engagement

engagement with Lady Warwick. It is resolved; I consecrate myself to the calm pleasures of the sylvan scene, and am ready to assume the scrip and crook to accommodate myself to the services of my country.

When you reflect upon this proposal, you will see how very necessary it will be, at that time, to have some person near your favourite, who knows the hearts of women, and has been accustomed to the arts of imposing on them. At one time you must be charged with some important business with the Duke; at another you must be engaged to hunt—to-morrow, to a private supper, with some great man; and, if I have any talents, either in

address

address or converse, I will exert them all to amuse her from suspicion; and the very day after your rupture with Lady Warwick, I will restore her lovely rival to your arms, without the danger of her having lost the smallest portion of her confidence in you.

You are, I understand, going to a ball given by the fair Warwick, on Monday. All the world will be there. Do not flatter her too much. Mortify her now and then; the bluntness and indifference of yesterday, makes the respectful attention of the morrow the more acceptable. Be gay and careless; seem always in a hurry; make short visits, and do not utter a syllable without some purpose; appear to be

perfectly

perfectly free yourself, and you will the sooner render her a slave.

If you happen to know a pretty woman whom she dislikes, it would not be amiss to shew assiduous attention towards her. Though this is a secret known to the whole world, it sometimes succeeds; we must reserve those that are less common for great occasions. Why should we quit the field, when there needs but a skirmish to gain a battle?

Adieu, my friend!—Act coolly, and with method, if you can be advised.

BELVILLE.

LETTER XX.

Lord Clermont to Sir Frederick Neville.

I WAS at home yesterday, my dear Neville, when you called on me, but I feared to see you, and fled.— Alas! my heart is at length culpable. I have said a thousand times more to

myself

myself upon Ismena's account than ever you have done; I am almost distracted, between my regard for her and my attachment to another. My passion for the divine woman who now occupies my heart, without doubt, will not be lasting—but must I confess it to you?—It tyrannizes over me for the present;—even sleep cannot save me from the impression of her charms; her image gives an existence to my very dreams. Ismena calls forth my respect—Lady Warwick inflames my passions. Wretched at betraying the one, I should yet be transported in the other's arms. It is Cecilia I seek, even in the moment that I embrace Ismena. Nay, my passion becomes the more obstinate, from being com-

bated and restrained by another sentiment.

I confess—what can I do more?—Ismena is kind and faithful!—but her rival—I cannot find words to describe her. She is accused of being inconstant—would you believe it?—That very circumstance has determined my pursuit. The lovely Cecilia, in crowning my wishes, will not exact any sacrifice from me; she will herself, alas! restore me to my first ties. It shall be so:—she only can save me from herself. I should be an object of pity, indeed, were she capable of a sincere attachment; but with all the charms of love, she has its fickleness also. This reflection secures my

mind

mind in peace; and if I am faithless for a moment, it is with a design of being constant ever after.

My friend, it is no longer in my power to conquer myself; I have been imprudent enough to write to her yesterterday, and have confessed what I could no longer conceal from her. I have not received an answer yet, and am ready to expire with anxiety and impatience. No matter: the worse she treats me, the more she will attract me. Self-love sometimes goes as far as a nobler passion. I know not what I would have; but this I know, that the agitation of my mind is dreadful. I am tortured by two sentiments, and know not which of them predomi-

nates.

nates. Could she not answer me one single word? That answer might, perhaps, have rendered me wretched, but her silence kills me.

Adieu, Neville!—Ours is the age of passion, be therefore tender of mine. What do I say?—I have no real attachment but to Ismena!—How powerful then must be those charms which wrest me from it?—I cannot account for this matter to myself. I am dissatisfied with every thing; completely wretched.—Ismena, thou hast a dangerous rival!

END OF VOL. I.

Harding and Wright, Printers, St. John's Square, London.